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Welcome to the 107th season at Cleveland Play House, in the heart of Playhouse Square. We're so glad that you're here! This moment is particularly meaningful as theatres across the country work alongside all the performing arts in rebuilding our most important relationship — with you. Thank you for joining your neighbors in community to experience a live stage production.

And what a production! We’ve partnered with our colleagues at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival to bring you a heartfelt story filled with music and colorful exuberance. Not familiar with mariachi music? You will be! Want an inspirational tale with characters you can root for? Watch it unfold! Love Mexican culture and customs? You’re in for a treat!

CPH is a civic space for dialogue and discovery. It’s a non-profit dedicated to making theatrical stories come alive onstage through the creativity of our Cleveland artisans and our guest artists. We want everyone to feel welcome in our performance spaces and community programming.

On behalf of our Board of Directors and talented staff, our deepest gratitude for completing the equation: We can’t do it without you!

Enjoy!

Collette A. Laisure
Managing Director

Mark Cuddy
Interim Artistic Director
DISCOVER THE SECRETS THAT LIE ACROSS THE FRAGILE BOUNDARY BETWEEN OUR WORLD AND THE OTHER ONE...

THE THIN PLACE

OCTOBER 7 — 30

Written By Lucas Hnath
Directed By Colin Anderson

DOBAMA.ORG
LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The cast, crew, and creative team of this production and the CPH staff would like to acknowledge those of the Shawnee, Miami, Erie, Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Haudenosaunee peoples, whose lands we stand on, and the nearly 28,000 Native American people who live in Northeast Ohio today who represent over 100 tribal nations. For information about the lands on which you reside, visit native.land.ca.
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in association with Alabama Shakespeare Festival
welcomes you to

AMERICAN MARIACHI

by JOSÉ CRUZ GONZÁLEZ
Directed by HENRY GODINEZ

Original Musical Arrangements by CYNTHIA REIFLER FLORES

SCENIC DESIGNER
LINDA BUCHANAN

COSTUME DESIGNER
DANIELLE NIEVES

LIGHTING DESIGNER
MARÍA-CRISTINA FUSTÉ

SOUND DESIGNER
RAY NARDELLI

HAIR & MAKEUP DESIGNER
JASON P. HAYES

MUSIC DIRECTOR
CYNTHIA REIFLER FLORES

STAGE MANAGER
ANA MUÑOZ

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
CASSANDRA WHITT

September 17 – October 9, 2022
ALLEN THEATRE

* * *

American Mariachi received its world premiere on February 2, 2018 at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts Theatre Company, Chris Coleman, Artistic Director, and on March 29, 2018 at the Old Globe, Barry Edelstein, Artistic Director, and Timothy J. Shields, Managing Director.
SYNOPSIS

When a mariachi recording reawakens her mother’s memory, Lucha vows to learn and perform the song live. She recruits members for an all-female band, tracks down instruments, and stands up to long-held cultural traditions. Follow her journey in this heartwarming story of family and the power of song.

TIME: Mid-1970s  PLACE: A Chicano community somewhere in the United States

CAST

(in alphabetical order)

SOYLA ...........................................................................................................................Gloria Vivica Benavides*
AMALIA ........................................................................................................................................Gigi Cervantes*
HORTENSIA (BOLI) ...................................................................................................................Lucy Godínez*
FEDERICO ..............................................................................................................................Ricardo Gutierrez*
ISABEL ......................................................................................................................................Molly Hernández*
TÍA CARMEN ..........................................................................................................................Eréndira Izguerra
GABBY ......................................................................................................................Amanda Raquel Martinez*
MINO ...........................................................................................................................................Bobby Plasencia*
MATEO .................................................................................................................Christopher Llewelyn Ramirez*
LUCHA .....................................................................................................................................Elizabeth Romero*

Understudies never appear for a listed player unless a specific announcement is made at the time of the performance.
For LUCHA, BOLI, GABBY, and ISABEL: Melinette Pallares*
For FEDERICO, MINO, and MATEO: Julian Diaz*

MARIACHIS

Daniel Ochoa (Vihuela); Ayan “Yaya” Vazquez-Lopez (Violin); Diego Lucero (Guitarrón); Ricardo Vejar (Trumpet)

*Indicates member of Actors’ Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

The director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union. The scenic, costume, lighting, sound, and projections designers in LORT Theatres are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.

All musicians are represented by the Cleveland Federation of Musicians, Local 4 of the American Federation of Musicians, Leonard DiCosimo, President.

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

ASSOCIATE MUSIC DIRECTOR .............................................................................................Eréndira Izguerra
ASSOCIATE LIGHTING DESIGNER ...........................................................................................Mike Morin
SOUND TECHNICIAN/A1 ........................................................................................................Simon Tursky
STAGE CREW .......................................................................................................................Christian Andrews, Shane Thackler, McKenzie Waugh
COVID COMPLIANCE OFFICER/STAGE CREW ..................................................................Stephanie Bahnij

THIS PLAY WILL BE PERFORMED WITHOUT AN INTERMISSION.

Wowed by the set? Feel free to snap a photo before the show, during intermission, or after the show. Don’t forget to tag Cleveland Play House (@cleveplayhouse on Twitter and Instagram) and use the hashtag #CPHMariachi.

During the performance, photography, video, and/or audio recording by any means is strictly prohibited.
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WHERE WILL THE ARTS TAKE YOU NEXT?
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American Mariachi, José Cruz González’s funny and deeply moving play that we’re so proud to share with you this evening, is a story about family, tradition, and love. Set in the 1970s, it’s also a story about female empowerment, about how a group of young women discover the healing power of music, and yet are summarily dismissed for wanting to use it to establish new traditions. However, through the character of Amalia, whose dream of becoming a female Mariachi was crushed by her husband’s jealousy, and whose struggles with the onset of dementia have left her isolated, this play is also a reminder of the considerable impact that an illness of the mind has on so many families.

The mariachi music in this play may be uniquely Mexican but the story is quintessentially American, hence the title. The characters’ struggles and aspirations are universal and central to the American Dream no matter where you’re from or what language you speak. If you have family, if you have faced adversity, and if you value traditions, chances are that you’ll see yourself in this story.

Through its infectious music, humor, and compassion, American Mariachi inspires us to follow our dreams, and offers us the possibility of redemption from the tendency to dismiss others, especially women, who seek to create new traditions. Family, tradition, and love are universal human truths that transcend culture and time and offer us the possibility of realizing that we are all maybe more alike than we are different.

—Henry Godinez
Each issue of Cleveland Magazine brings you the very best in arts and entertainment, dining, fashion, home and garden and health care.
José Cruz González (Playwright) and Henry Godinez (Director) have both been telling stories of Latinx communities and creating opportunities for Latinx actors for years, but it wasn’t until American Mariachi that they finally got the chance to collaborate. This summer, the Cleveland Play House staff had an opportunity to sit down with both of them to hear a bit more about the show’s prehistory before coming to CPH.

Inspiration for the play and the partnership:
José was looking for a new challenge and - while teaching at California State University, Los Angeles — saw a performance by a student mariachi band that got him interested in the music. Despite having no formal training, he quickly signed up for the class taught by Cynthia Reifler Flores (American Mariachi’s musical director), and spent a decade diving deep into mariachi. While studying, he became interested in the stories of women musicians and also “noticed that [his] mother, who was battling dementia, would come alive [when she heard] music. These were the seeds of the play.”

With a mother that also suffered from dementia, Henry was drawn both to how specific and universal the story of Mariachi was. While it focuses on one Mexican family’s reasons for being in this country, it takes in themes of love, tradition, and memory that are common to all families. He hopes that a variety of people will see themselves in the play and be inspired by a story that is “a manifestation of José’s joyful and beautiful spirit.”

How music was chosen and incorporated into the show:
José wrote two songs for the show — “Lo Abandoné” and “Mi Rosa Como Ninguna;” the rest were taken from the canon of mariachi music, with preference given to songs with 2-3 chords that would be easy for new musicians to learn. When auditions were held, the priority was finding strong actors, then discovering if they could sing, and finally, if they could learn an instrument. In many cases, the experience of the actors is the same as their characters: they are learning to play an instrument for the first time. It’s been wonderful for Henry to watch the actors learn skills from the professional mariachi musicians and — in turn — give the musicians some acting tips.

How audiences have responded:
José and Henry have been so gratified by audience response to American Mariachi. Some people now appreciate mariachi music as something more than “the annoying backdrop at a Mexican restaurant.” Others have been able to walk into a theater space for the first time, feeling like they belong, and have brought family members back to see their story onstage. Everyone has left touched and inspired.
The music plays. The song starts flowing through your mind. You hear the rhythm and melody and sense the tempo. You become mindful of the instrumentation, the lyrics, and reflect on the message. Your emotions and memory are engaged and your body starts to synchronize with the beat. You become immersed in the sensation. You laugh, you cry, you relax, you get angry; your relationship with music brings both pleasure and pain. You are moved to share a thought, a feeling, a memory. A conversation is sparked and a connection is made. The power of music! A power that touches the lives of all people, all ages, that is shared yet also unique and personal. This holds true for adults diagnosed with dementia and specifically Alzheimer’s disease. At The Music Settlement, we honor the power of healing with music.

Studies in music therapy with older adults with dementia show that the prescribed use of music helps decrease depression and improve mood, decrease anxiety and agitation, and decrease use of medication. It can also increase alertness and orientation, enhance cognition and memory, improve communication and meaningful socialization, improve sleep and appetite, and reduce caregiver stress.* Studies have also shown increased connectivity in specific areas of the brain related to cognitive and motor functions.

Music therapists, when working with individuals with memory loss, are mindful of exactly which music is most constructive. It is recommended to use music that is preferred and is not associated with any traumatic event(s). Music therapy evaluation ensures the listener is able to adequately communicate their needs and preferences. Music Therapists also provide careful monitoring of non-verbal responses to music interventions, and ensure a manageable volume, while decreasing any unnecessary noise or visual stimulation. A professional music therapist holds a bachelor’s degree or higher in music therapy from one of over 80 American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) approved college and university programs. According to the AMTA, “Music Therapy is an established health profession in which music is used within a therapeutic relationship to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals.” For caregivers and/or children of individuals diagnosed with dementia, considering events associated with the music, listening to songs together can open doors to increased interaction and reminiscing.

*AMTA Fact Sheet on Music & Dementia Care
WHO’S WHO

GLORIA VIVICA BENAVIDES (Soyla) is thrilled to make her Cleveland Play House debut! Regional credits include Somewhere Over the Border (Syracuse Stage and Geva Theatre Center); American Mariachi (Goodman Theatre and Alabama Shakespeare Festival); Real Women Have Curves, White Rabbit, Red Rabbit (Dallas Theater Center); Scrooge in Rouge (Stage West); Dracula (Theatre Three); and A Doll’s House, and Elliot, A Soldier’s Fugue (WaterTower Theatre). She is currently the voice of Scarlett on One Piece with FUNimation, and is represented by the Campbell Agency. She earned her BFA in theatre from the University of North Texas.

GIGI CERVANTES (Amalia) is excited to make her Cleveland Play House debut and reprise the role she previously performed at Goodman Theatre, Dallas Theater Center, and Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Gigi recently appeared as Mrs. Webb in Dallas Theater Center’s Our Town. Other theatre credits include A Christmas Carol, The View Upstairs, Glorious!, so go the ghosts of méxico, The Last Night of Ballyhoo, and Cowgirls. She dedicates this performance to her mother Vera, and to all those caring for someone with dementia.

JULIAN DIAZ (Male Understudy) is making his Cleveland Play House debut. Other roles include Chicago: It’s a Wonderful Life: A Radio Play (Oil Lamp Theater); Richard III (Eclectic Full Contact Theatre); As You Like It (CenterStage Lake Forest). California: Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of The Great Nome Gold Rush, King O’ The Moon (North Coast Rep); Noises Off! (The Welk Resort Theatre); Picasso at the Lapin Agile (Torrance Theatre Company); Big Love (The Complex Theatre); and A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Antony & Cleopatra (Shakespeare by the Sea). TV: Days of Our Lives. Commercial: Rock the Vote’s #CareLikeCrazy campaign. Julian is represented by BMG Talent. www.julianrdiaz.com

LUCY GODÍNEZ (Boli) is so happy to be bringing this show to Cleveland Play House after appearing in the role at the Goodman Theatre, Dallas Theater Center, and Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Other regional credits include Aldonza in Man of La Mancha at Fulton Theater; Nancy in Oliver! and Ariel in Footloose at Marriott Theatre; Little Red Riding Hood in Into The Woods at Writers Theatre; and Nina in In The Heights with Porchlight Music Theater. A Chicago native, she is a graduate of Northwestern University. Que siga la lucha!

MOLLY HERNÁNDEZ (Isabel) (she/her) is a graduate of the Actors Gymnasium Professional Circus Training Program and is represented by Gray Talent Group. She also has

RICARDO GUTIERREZ (Federico) is pleased to make his debut at Cleveland Play House. He was most recently seen in American Mariachi at Goodman Theatre and Alabama Shakespeare Festival, and Mother of the Maid at Northlight Theatre. Other recent credits include Ah, Wilderness! and Destiny of Desire (Goodman); In The Heights (The Paramount); and the world premieres of Song For The Disappeared and Fish Men (Goodman). Gutierrez has appeared on stage at South Coast Rep, Actors Theatre of Louisville, The Denver Center Theatre, Dallas Theatre Center, Steppenwolf Theatre, Victory Gardens, and Lookingglass Theatre. Recent television credits include Chicago PD, Chicago Fire, Chicago MD, Sirens, and Boss. An accomplished and award-winning director, Ricardo is the former artistic director of Teatro Vista in Chicago, Nosotros in Los Angeles, and the Canterbury Theatre in Indiana.
a BA in Spanish from Loyola University Chicago. Recent credits include Alice Through the Lookingglass (Lookingglass Theatre), American Mariachi (Goodman Theatre, Dallas Theater Center), Into the Woods (Writer’s Theatre), Into the Breeches (Northlight Theatre), Masterclass (TimeLine Theatre), The Buddy Holly Story (American BluesTheater–Jeff Award), The Most Happy Fella (Theo Ubique–Jeff Nomination), and Carousel (Timber Lake Playhouse). Molly can be seen on Power: Book IV (STARZ), Chicago Med (NBC), Chicago PD (NBC), and APB (FOX).

Proud member of AEA and SAG. For Audrey. @mollymhernandez

ERÉNDIRA IZGUERRA (Tía Carmen) is a multi-instrumentalist and educator who graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) with a degree in violin performance. During her time there, she formed Illinois’ first collegiate Mariachi, UIC Mariachi Fuego (2014), later co-founding Chicago’s first all-women Mariachi, Mariachi Sirenas (2017). Izguerra has performed and recorded nationally and internationally with artists including Grammy-nominated Sones de Mexico Ensemble, Emmy-Award-winning Orbert Davis, and Jalisco’s Mariachi Femenil Nuevo Tecalitlán. She debuted as Tía Carmen in American Mariachi at Chicago’s Goodman Theatre.

AMANDA RAQUEL MARTINEZ (Gabby) is excited to bring this vibrant show to life at Cleveland Play House! Regional credits include Somewhere Over the Border (Teatro Vista); American Mariachi (Goodman Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival); American Bottom, 33 to Nothing (A Red Orchid Theatre); Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (The McCarter Theatre in association with Lookingglass Theatre); Ghost Quartet (Black Button Eyes Productions); La Ruta (Steppenwolf); Big Lake, Big City (Lookingglass Theatre); Cinderella at the Theater of Potatoes (Hypocrites); Pirates of Penzance (Pasadena Playhouse, Skirball Theatre Center, Olney Theatre); Kitty Hawk (Adrienne Arsht Center); The Mikado (Olney Theatre Center); and As You Like It; Love, Loss and What I Wore (First Folio Theatre).

MELINETTE PALLARES (Female Understudy) is a NYC-based actor, singer, and entrepreneur. Regional credits include American Mariachi (Goodman Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival); Evita (Lyric Stage Dallas); Man of La Mancha (Lyric Stage Dallas); A Chorus Line (Riverside Center for the Performing Arts); West Side Story and More (Newport Music Festival); and In the Heights (GALA Hispanic Theatre). Her education includes a BA in theatre and dance from The University of Texas at Austin, The Folster Studio, Stella Adler Studio of Acting, and CAP 21. @melinettepallares melinettepallares.com

BOBBY PLASENCIA (Mino) is excited to be making his Cleveland Play House debut and sharing the stage with such a talented group of artists! Stage credits include Syracuse Stage, Geva Theater, Goodman Theater, Dallas Theater Center, Denver Center, Old Globe, Humana Fest, San Diego Rep (Craig Noel Award), South Coast Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, Interact Theater, ISCLA, Mark Taper Forum, MITU580, BRIC Brooklyn, Working Theater, INTAR, LaMama, and The Drilling Company. Film and TV include House of Cards (Netflix), General Hospital (ABC Television), Fidel (Showtime), Maria, Full of Grace (Sundance, HBO Films) and Angelfish starring Princess Nokia. He received his MFA in acting from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts.

CHRISTOPHER LLEWYN RAMIREZ (Mateo) is a resident acting company member at the Dallas Theater Center and a director in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. Stage credits include American Mariachi (Goodman Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival); In The Heights, Sweat, Twelfth Night, As You Like It, Hair and HOOD (Dallas Theater Center); and Stede Bonnet: A F*cking Pirate Musical (Theatre Three). Chris recently co-wrote and directed a Mexican
ELIZABETH ROMERO (Lucha) is thrilled to make her Cleveland Play House debut. Regional credits include *American Mariachi* (Goodman Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival); *Beauty and the Beast* (Paramount Theatre); *Ragtime* (Park Playhouse); and *Into the Woods* and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (Rose Center Theatre). She is a graduate of Northwestern University, where she pursued musical theatre performance and arts administration. She interned with Baseline Theatrical, where she worked on the Broadway productions of *Hamilton* and *The Great Comet of 1812*. Elizabeth received the 2012 Jimmy Award for Best Actress in a Musical.

JOSÉ CRUZ GONZÁLEZ (Playwright) Mr. González’s plays include *If by Chance*, (South Coast Repertory commission), *The Extraordinary ZLuna Captures the World* (Denver Center Theatre Company commission), *Under a Baseball Sky* (The Old Globe commission), *American Mariachi* (Arizona Theatre Company, Denver Center Theatre Company, South Coast Repertory, The Goodman Theatre, The Old Globe), *Sunsets & Margaritas* (Denver Center Theatre Company, Theatre Works), *September Shoes* (Geva Theatre), *The San Patricios* (PCPA), *Among the Darkest Shadows* (Wharton Center for Performing Arts), *The Long Road Today* (South Coast Repertory), *The Magic Kite* (Children’s Theatre of Charlotte), *The Sun Serpent* (Children’s Theatre of Charlotte), *Super Cow Girl and Mighty Miracle* (Metro Theater Company), and *Tomás and the Library Lady* (Children’s Theatre of Charlotte). Mr. González was selected as one of the inaugural 2022 Kennedy Center’s Next 50, a new initiative celebrating cultural leadership with 50 trailblazing leaders and organizations. Mr. González was also a grantee of the 2021 ReImagine: New Plays in TYA, a joint effort of the Children’s Theatre Foundation of America, The Kennedy Center, TYA/USA and Write Now to support in part the
development of *Pia's Wondrous Adventures in Tlaxlandia*. He has written for PAZ, the Emmy Award nominated television series produced by Discovery Kids for The Learning Channel. *The Astronaut Farmworker* (La Jolla Playhouse) was a 2016 PEN Center USA Literary Award Finalist. A collection of his plays, *Nine Plays by José Cruz González Magical Realism & Mature Themes in Theatre for Young Audiences* was published by the University of Texas Press. He is a Professor Emeritus at California State University Los Angeles, a member of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, The Dramatists Guild of America, TYA/USA, and a board member of the New Harmony Project, dedicated to a desire to support stories of hope, optimism, and the resiliency of the human spirit.

HENRY GODINEZ *(Director)* is the resident artistic associate at Goodman Theatre, where he most recently directed *Fannie: The Music and Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* by Cheryl West for Goodman, Seattle Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, The Asolo, and Arena Stage. Godinez has also directed the works of Luis Valdez, Charise Castro Smith, José Rivera, Karen Zacarias, Regina Taylor, Luís Alfaro, Cheryl West, and Nilo Cruz. Other directing work includes The O'Neill Theatre Center, Yale Rep, Signature Theatre, Dallas Theatre Center, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, The Children’s Theatre Company, Studio Theatre, and Denver Center for the Performing Arts. Godinez is a professor at Northwestern University.

LINDA BUCHANAN *(Scenic Designer)* is glad to be back at Cleveland Play House after designing at theatres throughout the country and abroad. Her work has been seen in Chicago at Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf, Court Theatre, and Paramount; and regionally at Arena Stage, Alley Theatre, Indiana Rep, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Kansas City Rep, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Milwaukee Rep, Seattle Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Syracuse Stage, Yale Rep, Resident Ensemble Theatre, Great Lakes Theatre, and many others. Buchanan is professor emeritus at DePaul University, where she headed the scene design program. Recent credits include *Gem of the Ocean* (Goodman Theatre); *Stick Fly* (Writers Theatre); *Murder on the Orient Express* (Resident
Institute. www.daniellenieves.com Western costumes from the Kyoto Costume and a curatorial certification for Japanese and design from the University of California-Irvine, Electric Bear.

Blame Pasquale, Bluebeard's Castle, Madama Butterfly, Don

RAY NARDELLI (Sound Designer) has off-Broadway credits that include Lookingglass Alice at The New Victory Theatre. Regional theatre credits include Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, McCarter Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Milwaukee Rep Theatre, The Court Theatre, Hartford Stage, The Alliance Theatre, Syracuse Stage, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Congo Square, Buffalo Arena Stage, The Alley Theatre, American Theatre Company, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Northlight Theatre, Drury Lane Theatre, Notre Dame Summer Shakespeare, Shakespeare On The Green, Oak Park Festival Theatre, Dolphinback Theatre, American Girl Theatre (New York, Chicago), and Skylight Opera. Ray has more than 400 film, TV, DVD, and computer game credits worldwide. He has been nominated seven times for a Jeff Award, garnering four wins. He’s also done production work on The Jersey Boys National Tour, Billy Elliot, pre-Broadway The Addams Family, and All Shook Up. Mr. Nardelli’s memberships include USA #829, ASCAP, and IATSE #2.

JASON P. HAYES (Wig and Hair Designer) returns to Cleveland Play House after his terrific work on last season’s The Three Musketeers. Jason is a 2016 and 2017 Drama Desk Award nominee for Outstanding Wig & Hair Design for his work on The Legend of Georgia McBride and The View Upstairs. Hayes was the hair supervisor for The Present, starring Cate Blanchett. His Broadway theatrical design credits include Casa Valentina, The Realistic Joneses, Spring Awakening, Blithe Spirit, 13 The Musical, and The Radio City Christmas Spectacular for 10 years. His film and TV credits include iMoredecai, The Mysteries of Laura, Smash, Hostages, 30 Rock, Mercy, Gossip Girl, Saturday Night Live, Transamerica, Camp, The Savages, and Party Monster, to name just a few. Celebrity clients include Cate Blanchett, RuPaul, Angelica Huston, Debra Messing, Toni Colette, Dylan McDermott, Jennifer Hudson, Liza Minnelli, Angela Lansbury, Paul Rudd, Patrick Stewart, and many more.

CYNTHIA REIFLER FLORES (Music Director) began as a classical violinist and has played with Mariachis ranging from bar bands to the Grammy Award-winning Mariachi Divas — but is best known as the leader of Mariachi Reyna de Los Angeles, the first all-female Mariachi of international import. She continues performing with the female group Trio Corazón. Flores directs the Mariachi programs at University of California-Riverside, and California State University-Los
Angeles. She edits a column on women in Mariachi in *The International Journal of Mariachi Education and Performance*, a bilingual publication, and has served as musical director, arranger, and performer on other works by José Cruz González. Cynthia lives in California with her son, Bruce, her husband, Pedro Flores (a renowned Mariachi musician), an albino rabbit, and an enthusiastic dog.

**ANA MUÑOZ** (*Stage Manager*) grew up in Montgomery, attending countless Alabama Shakespeare Festival Schoolfest shows, and was thrilled to finally stage-manage *American Mariachi* there, and then travel with the show to Cleveland. Most recently, Ana was a Seasonal SM at TheatreSquared in Arkansas, working on shows including *Matilda, American Mariachi, The Heart’s Desire, The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity,* and *Miss You Like Hell*. Other credits include HGTV’s *Home Town Takeover,* and Trans Theatre Fest Madison. Ana is a proud Purple Side graduate of the University of Montevallo. This show is dedicated to her Meemaw, Rena Dispennette, and all others suffering from Alzheimer’s.

**CASSANDRA WHITT** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is excited to travel with the *American Mariachi* team to Cleveland from Alabama. She is a recent graduate of the University of Montevallo with a BS in theatre, and some of her favorite shows there include *Stop Kiss, Priscilla, Queen of the Desert;* and *Chicago.* She would like to thank her family for supporting her through this chapter in her journey, as well as all the ones to come.

**CLEVELAND PLAY HOUSE**, founded in 1915 and recipient of the 2015 Regional Theatre Tony Award, is America’s first professional regional theatre. Throughout its rich history, CPH has remained dedicated to its mission to inspire, stimulate and entertain diverse audiences across Northeast Ohio by producing plays and theatre education programs of the highest professional standards. CPH has produced more than 100 world and/or American premieres, and over its long history more than 12 million people have attended over 1,600 productions. Today, Cleveland Play House celebrates the beginning of its second century of service while performing in three state-of-the-art venues at Playhouse Square in downtown Cleveland.

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Cleveland Play House is delighted to announce the return of a FREE family holiday event — Festival of Trees! Contact Karen Hernandez at 216.400.7037 or khernandez@clevelandplayhouse.com for more information.
MARK CUDDY (Interim Artistic Director) joined Cleveland Play House as Interim Artistic Director in July 2022. He served as artistic director of Geva Theatre Center in Rochester, NY, for 27 years. Mr. Cuddy led Geva through a renaissance of artistic and institutional growth with a diverse repertory, topflight artists, wide-reaching educational programs, and a commitment to new play development. He is a founding member of the board of directors for the Rochester Fringe Festival that just concluded its fourth year, and served on the board of directors of the only national service organization for non-profit theatres, Theatre Communications Group. As a director, Mr. Cuddy is known for his productions of musicals, contemporary comedies, and premieres. He also directed the CPH/Geva co-production of Clybourne Park. His Geva productions include Once, The Humans, Ring of Fire, Good People, To Kill a Mockingbird, You Can't Take it With You, Superior Donuts, A Midsummer Night's Dream co-directed with Skip Greer, and Company, as well as his adaptation of A Christmas Carol with music and lyrics by Gregg Coffin. Among his many other Geva credits are The Music Man, Sweeney Todd, Fences, Five Course Love, A Christmas Story, and Pride and Prejudice (co-adaptor), and the world premieres of Convenience (musical) by Gregg Coffin, Theophilus North by Matthew Burnett from Thornton Wilder (also at Arena Stage), Splitting Infinity by Jamie Pachino, Famous Orpheus by Oyamo (choreography by Garth Fagan), House and Garden by Alan Ayckbourn (East Coast premiere), and That Was Then (American premiere). Mr. Cuddy has also served as artistic director of Sacramento Theatre Company, producing director of the Idaho Shakespeare Festival and on the directing staff of the Denver Center Theatre Company. He has served on the review panels for the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts. Mr. Cuddy received his B.A. in theatre/honors from the University of Massachusetts, where he was a Commonwealth Scholar.

COLLETTE A. LAISURE (Managing Director) joined the Cleveland Play House leadership on February 15, 2021, partnering with board chair Anne Marie Warren and artistic director Laura Kepley to support the board and staff with overall business operations. Previously, Laisure served as vice president and executive director of the PNC Fairfax Connection from 2012 to 2017, spearheading the strategic and operational direction of the thriving community resource center located in Cleveland’s Fairfax neighborhood. Collette served as the president and executive director of The Presidents’ Council and has held board leadership roles at UH Rainbow Babies & Children’s Foundation, Cleveland Public Theatre, Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation, and Karamu House. Laisure also served as director of The City of Cleveland’s Office of Equal Opportunity, where she managed a budget of $1 million and was responsible for administering and monitoring compliance with the Female- and Minority-owned Business Enterprise program. She is a member of Leadership Cleveland’s Class of 2008, and a 2008 Crain’s Cleveland Business Woman of Note.
WHO’S WHO: THE MARIACHIS

DIEGO LUCERO
(Guitarrón) (he/him) is an interdisciplinary multi-genre artist. He plays eight instruments including the guitar, keyboard, and guitarrón. He makes all sorts of music like mariachi, rock, rap, and EDM. He’s performed on Nickelodeon, won Chicago’s Rising Star Award, and most recently played at Lollapalooza. He also loves to work on psychedelic visual art. To check out his work, please follow @iamdiegolucero on Instagram and follow his Spotify, Diego Lucero.

DANIEL OCHOA
(Vihuela) is a Mariachi, Rock, and Pop musician born, raised, and based out of Tucson, Arizona. Originally starting out as a pianist, he took to Mariachi music playing guitar, vihuela, and guitarrón. He also performs frequently in Spanish rock bands as an electric guitarist, bassist, keyboard player, and vocalist.

AYAN “YAYA” VASQUEZ-LOPEZ
(Violin) (she/they) is a transfemme Latinx mariachi musician, drag artist, and online media producer based in Los Angeles, California. Through her work, Yaya strives to create authentic representation for queer, brown, gender non-conforming Latinx people in online media and in real life. She is ecstatic and humbled to be a part of such an ICONIC show like American Mariachi at Cleveland Play House! You can find Yaya performing online and IRL as The Makeup Mariachi (@themakeupmariachi). Follow for more!

RICARDO VEJAR
(Trumpet) most recently worked as the primary trumpet player and singer for Tucson’s own Mariachi Sonido de México. Over the years he has also worked with several Mariachis including: Mariachi Tapatio, Mariachi Sol Azteca, Mariachi de Cuco Del Cid. He plays trumpet and sings for Ballet Folklórico Tapatio, and Compañía de Danza Folklórica Arizona.

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**SDC** The director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

**TCG** Cleveland Play House is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre.

**IATSE and UNITED SCENIC ARTISTS 829** Carpenters and Electricians at Cleveland Play House are members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the U.S. and Canada IATSE Local 27.

**AFM** All musicians are represented by the Cleveland Federation of Musicians, Local 4 of the American Federation of Musicians, Leonard DiCosimo, President.

Cleveland Play House and Cleveland State University have a formal education partnership that enhances the learning opportunities of CSU students. For more information, call the CSU Theatre Department at 216-687-2113.

Playhouse Square is a not-for-profit performing arts center that presents and produces a wide variety of performing arts, advances arts education and creates a destination that is a superior location for entertainment, business and residential living, thereby strengthening the economic vitality of the region.

**Playbill Editor:** Linda Feagler

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What Would It Cost to Build Them Today?

Even though the Connor Palace is not the largest of the Playhouse Square venues, it was the most costly to build ($3.5 million) by the time it premiered on Nov. 6, 1922. The largest theater, the State, (opened Feb. 5, 1921) was built at a cost of $2 million; the Ohio (Feb. 14, 1921) also cost $2 million, and the Allen's costs totaled $1.9 million when it opened April 1, 1921. (Exact building costs for the Hanna Theatre — which opened March 28, 1921 — have yet to be uncovered.)

A Phoenix from the Ashes

In 1964, the Mimi Ohio Theatre lobby and auditorium were destroyed by fire. When the fledgling Playhouse Square organization restored the spaces in 1982, funding and time constraints made it possible only for the auditorium to be fully restored. Thanks to a gift from the George Gund Foundation, the lobby was re-created in its original splendor in 2016. You can watch a documentary about the project, “Restoring the Legacy,” on Playhouse Square’s YouTube channel.

Re-Creating History

We call the completed Mimi Ohio Theatre George Gund Foundation Lobby project a “re-creation” rather than a restoration. Why? There was nothing left to restore after a 1964 fire destroyed the space. To reproduce the lobby’s original 1921 splendor, architects, restoration specialists and Playhouse Square staff conducted exhaustive research of the original drawings by architect Thomas Lamb, photo archives and a few remaining bits of ornamental plaster detail to gain a thorough understanding of the space and inform the plans for re-creating the lobby.

Broadway to Buildings

Where do the arts and real estate go hand-in-hand? At Playhouse Square, of course! As the theaters began to be restored in the early 1980s, it was thought that developers would step in to build and open businesses around them. When that didn't happen, Playhouse Square began to steward development of the surrounding neighborhood. In 1999, Playhouse Square became the first performing arts center with a real estate services division, which manages the one million square feet of property owned by the organization and another 1.5 million square feet outside the theater district. Other performing arts centers have since looked to our expertise as a model.

YPs Take the Lead

Best known as the masterminds behind the annual Jump Back Ball benefit, Playhouse Square's young professionals group – Partners – was formed in 1991. Since then, hundreds of young professionals engage with Playhouse Square each year to build leadership skills, raise funds and volunteer in support of our not-for-profit mission, enjoy shows together, network and have fun!

Keeping Up the KeyBank State Theatre

First restored more than 30 years ago, the KeyBank State Theatre was repainted from the street to the proscenium in 2015. The new, cohesive color palette showcases the beauty and craftsmanship of the nearly 100-year-old theater. It took 25 painters 12,500 hours and 595 gallons of paint in 15 different colors to complete the project, which also included 6000 sheets of new metal leafing in the auditorium dome and the application of a historically accurate wall-covering design. While the theater was dark, its lighting fixtures and restrooms received major upgrades.

What’s in a Logo?

The Playhouse Square logo we use today – a tilted burgundy square with a capital P in its center – was introduced in 2008 to capture the enduring spirit of entertainment and excitement. Each of the logo’s graphic elements has meaning: the exclamation point with a star in the “P” symbolizes excitement and innovation; the swirl in the “P” represents creativity and forward motion; the tilted square symbolizes Playhouse Square as a destination; and the burgundy color gives nod to the color scheme of our historic theaters.

Going Green

While red is the color most often associated with theaters, Playhouse Square is making efforts to go
“green.” You will find receptacles for recycling paper, plastic and cans, along with those designated specifically for the program you’re currently reading, throughout the complex. Lighting fixtures are being switched to LED for increased energy efficiency. And the Playhouse Square administrative office is making strides towards going paperless.

**Patterns in Plaster**

As you walk through the theaters, you may notice various patterns within the plaster decoration. Common are dentil, lamb tongue, rope and rosettes. Other patterns you may see have been associated with certain meanings since they were first used hundreds or even thousands of years ago, such as the acanthus leaf (immortality), egg and dart (life and death), and the palm leaf, first used in ancient Egypt as a reference to the Nile River. In the KeyBank State Theatre, if you look closely and carefully, you can find ox skulls, which were believed to offer protection from natural elements. And throughout the theaters, you will find griffins, mythical creatures thought of as guardians.

**No Butts About It**

In the 1920s, women were being enticed by such advertising as “reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet.” Although ladies who smoked in public were still frowned upon in 1922, the management decided to buck the controversy by creating the private Egyptian Smoking Room. Located off the main lobby, it allowed female guests a proper place to smoke. The room’s walls were of Hindu design; its carved furniture upholstered in a black and gold brocade Egyptian motif; wrought iron Egyptian-styled lamps were topped with red silk shades, and a rare carpet from India covered the floor.

Although the room retains the name of the Egyptian Smoking Room to this day, it is now used for administrative purposes because no smoking is allowed in any of the Playhouse Square spaces.

**Knot Your Average Carpet**

The original carpet that adorned the Connor Palace Grand Hall (main lobby) when the venue opened in 1922, was touted as the largest carpet in the world to be woven in one piece. Gray with wine-colored roses, the 67-foot by 40-foot carpet was created in Maffersdorf, Czecho-Slovakia and contained 9,000,272 knots — all tied by hand.

**Theatrical Vermin In No Need of the Orkin Man**

Mice and flies are two pests you would never stand for in your house, but both are necessary to every theater house! Mice are actually special shields placed over microphones on the floor at the front of a stage. Flies is the entire area above the stage (not visible to the audience) where scenery is hung and stored. Flymen (stagehands operating the counterweight system and flying scenery) often are located on the fly floor, which is the work area above the stage floor.

**Young STARS Shine At Playhouse Square**

You might see volunteer RedCoats from time to time who look like they’re not old enough to vote — and they aren’t. These youths are part of the successful STARS (Students Take A Role at the Square) program, where older students volunteer to usher at Broadway Series shows, concerts and other special events at the theaters. While the STARS program can be interesting and fun for all students, it becomes a particularly invaluable opportunity to gain experience and behind-the-scenes knowledge for those students who are planning future careers in the performing arts.

**Say Goodnight, Gracie**

Legendary comedy duo George Burns and Gracie Allen were married in Cleveland January 7, 1926 during their Playhouse Square booking. A brief, early-morning ceremony was performed by a Justice of the Peace, after which the newlyweds checked into the Statler Hotel. George’s older brother and his family (who lived in Akron) came up to Cleveland that afternoon to celebrate with the couple before George and Gracie returned to their room to honeymoon.

At 2 a.m. the phone rang. It was fellow comedian Jack Benny calling from Omaha. Immediately recognizing Jack’s voice, George cut him off saying, “Send up two orders of ham and eggs,” then hung up.

Ten minutes later the phone rang. It was Benny again. This time George interrupted his friend with, “You forgot the ketchup!” and hung up on Benny a second time. Half an hour later came a knock at the door. It was a waiter with two orders of ham and eggs. Trying to keep a straight face the waiter announced, “Compliments of Mr. Jack Benny from Omaha!”
As George liked to tell it, the newlyweds ate their Benny breakfast at 2:30 a.m., and, when they were done, Gracie said, “George, this was the high point of the night!”

**The KeyBank State Theatre Murals**

The four murals on the walls of the KeyBank State Theatre lobby were painted by American Modernist James Daugherty (1890-1974), whose work hangs in the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum and the Smithsonian. One of the murals, *The Spirit of Cinema*, was featured on the cover of *Life* magazine on February 20, 1970. It was that national attention that became the convincing argument to save the venue from the wrecking ball. Destruction of the State would also have meant the loss of the original historic Daugherty murals, since they are painted directly on the walls. Today they are the only Daugherty works which remain at the original site where they were painted.

**Performers Help Restore Playhouse Square**

During her 1996 run of *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, legendary Broadway star Chita Rivera was given a guided tour of Playhouse Square. As she followed her tour guide into the State auditorium, an excited Chita pointed to the mezzanine railing and proudly exclaimed, “I helped paint that!” Indeed, she had. In 1984, Chita had last played Playhouse Square when much restoration remained, and during her free time willingly added her brush strokes to the history of the State.

Likewise, Mary Travers of Peter, Paul & Mary fame also performed at the KeyBank State Theatre several times during its early restoration. She became so enthusiastic over the restoration process that she would climb the scaffolding and help paint the ceiling. Like Chita, on a return visit, Mary pointed out the ceiling area that she had helped paint (just-above-and-to-the-left of the Men’s Room doorway on the mezzanine).

**A Change in History?**

One of many fascinating items to be found in the book *Playhouse Square: An Entertaining History* deals with the infamous John Wilkes Booth. Booth performed locally at the old Academy of Music, which was one of the first drama schools in the country and was located at 1371 W. 6th Street. It was at that Cleveland Academy where he would play his last role prior to performing at Washington D.C.’s Ford Theatre where he would assassinate President Lincoln. (Might history have been changed if the Academy had held over Booth’s play for an extended run?)

**The GE Chandelier**

Officially the world’s largest outdoor chandelier, the 20-foot tall GE Chandelier is adorned with 4200 crystals. To find out how it was made, visit the Playhouse Square YouTube channel.

**Connor Palace Trivia**

Before the days of clothes dryers, touring performers were often forced to pull still-damp clothes off the drying line when it was time to pack and leave. During the vaudeville era, the Connor Palace (known then as the Palace) became known as one of the most performer-friendly venues in the country because of its many backstage amenities, one of which included a drying room. In this large room, wet clothes could be hung and hot air was continuously blown into the area to hasten the drying time.

**Singers’ Secrets**

Repeat three times: Performer packs pickle for perfect pipes. Singer Anita Baker surprised backstage workers during her sold out shows by keeping an ample supply of pickle juice in her dressing room — using it to gargle! (No report as to whether Anita acquired the pickle practice during her two pregnancies.) Likewise, another unusual gargling agent was the preference of singer Millie Jackson who required a certain imported beer as her gargle-of-choice.

**There Goes the Neighborhood!**

The 1870s ushered in the golden age for Euclid Avenue as the street became a stretch of grand mansions, with grounds often extending as far as Lake Erie, and stately elm trees arching over the avenue. Called Millionaire’s Row, it was the address where all the best families lived.

But by Cleveland’s Centennial in 1896, Euclid Avenue residents were likely muttering, Well, there goes the neighborhood! as the dirt street was paved with sandstone, and businessmen began to buy up and tear down the mansions and towering elms to make way for commercial ventures.
Streetcar lines on the once totally residential stretch hastened the creation of a commercial district, forcing wealthy families to move even farther east on Euclid Avenue. In another 30 years, the district would see the birth of the five main theaters that would eventually become Playhouse Square.

**KeyBank State Theatre Trivia**

The stage of the KeyBank State Theatre is so large that a typical high school gymnasium (complete with basketball court and bleachers) could easily fit on stage. As another point of comparison, three of the Mimi Ohio Theatre stages could fit onto the State's stage.

**Hanna Theatre Trivia**

Since its opening in 1921, the Hanna Theatre has been the site of two world premieres: Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Me and Juliette* in 1953 and, in 1974, *Odyssey* by Michel Legrand, starring Yul Brynner. Another first occurred in 1937, when Gilbert and Sullivan's first Cleveland-staged opera was performed at the Hanna by the D'Oyly Carte Company from London.

**Connor Palace: A Three Stooges Favorite**

In his biography, *Moe Howard & The Three Stooges*, Moe Howard wrote about the plight of dressing rooms on the road. Although dressing rooms were usually spartan at best and a hovel at worst, Howard had nothing but praise for the Connor Palace (known then as the Palace Theatre): “This theater was built without missing a thought for the actors’ comfort. The Palace was beautiful not only outside and in the auditorium, but also backstage. Most impressive was the second floor, which sported a regulation-size pool table, chess tables, comfortable chairs, an ice machine and soft drinks, playing cards, cigars — it had all the facilities of a private club. In the basement was a laundry room. There was even a nursery for youngsters.

Best of all were the dressing rooms, heavily carpeted with mirrored walls and make-up tables. They had everything in them, right down to padded coat hangers.”

**KeyBank State Theatre Trivia**

Above the fireplace at the rear of the KeyBank State Theatre auditorium, an original mural hangs despite its near-tragic loss. Removed from the wall in the early 1970s prior to the scheduled demolition of the venue, the mural eventually turned up in the basement of a piano store and was repurchased by Playhouse Square for $200.

The recovered mural was badly torn, having originally been painted on burlap then glued to the wall. The challenge of restoring the artwork fell to the Theater District’s Bonfoey Company. Artisans sanded the glue from the burlap and attached the cleaned mural to canvas via beeswax.

The next step was to clean and restore the work where needed. A stretcher for the canvas had to be custom-made. To eliminate tears and wrinkles, the stretcher was designed to expand and contract with the theater’s climactic changes and held together with springs (no nails or screws). It took Bonfoey employees 18 months to restore the painting at a cost of $8,500.

Although the creator of this mural is unknown, it is suspected to be Italian artist Sampitrotti, who had painted three murals for the original Mimi Ohio Theatre lobby. (Those murals were later destroyed in the Ohio’s 1964 lobby fire.)

**Kennedy's Cabaret Trivia**

The bar in Kennedy’s (the lower level cabaret space accessed by way of the Mimi Ohio Theatre lobby), might be familiar to Cleveland oldtimers. The former home of the bar was the Elegant Hog Saloon when the tavern was located on Buckeye Road.

**World’s Longest Lobby Explained**

In 1920 as the Loew’s chain anticipated building in the area that would come to be known as Playhouse Square, it was discovered there wasn’t sufficient room to build two theaters side by side in the available space.

Since it was important that the proposed theater marquees be located on Euclid Avenue, an architectural plan was devised. Even though the KeyBank State Theatre would be completed and open 21 months before the Connor Palace, it was decided to build the State behind the Connor Palace. This led to the construction of the State’s 320-foot-long lobby, reported to be the longest theater lobby in the world. The Mimi Ohio Theatre would then be built on the other side of the State, giving all three theaters the desired Euclid Avenue marquee frontage.
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Cameras, including cameras on cell phones and other personal handheld devices, audio/video recorders and flash photography are strictly prohibited.

Cell Phones
The experience of a live performance can be ruined by the interruption of ringtones, vibrating phones or conversation. The magic of a darkened theater can be disrupted by the light of someone text messaging as well. Please be considerate to others and remember to turn off your cell phone for the duration of the show.

Thank You
Playhouse Square gratefully acknowledges the people of Cuyahoga County for their historical support to theater restoration, upkeep and programming, as well as through their ongoing contributions through Cuyahoga Arts and Culture.
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New shows are announced every week. Sign up for the Playhouse Square newsletter at playhousesquare.org to get advance notices by email!
We believe that all Cleveland youth should have access to high-quality arts education. Through the generosity of our donors, we are investing to scale up neighborhood-based programs that now serve 3,000 youth year-round in music, dance, theater, photography, literary arts and curatorial mastery. That’s setting the stage for success. Find your passion, and partner with the Cleveland Foundation to make your greatest charitable impact.

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