February 2021

Town Hall

by Caridad Svich

directed by Cambria Herrera

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UC San Diego theatre + dance
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CAST

A Taiwo Sokan
B Leovina Charles
E Natalia Quintero-Riestra
S Sabrina Liu

CREATIVE TEAM

Scenic Designer Michael Wogulis
Costume Designer Zoë Trautmann
Lighting Designer Harrison Foster
Sound Designer Salvador Zamora
Production Stage Manager Allison Bailey
Assistant Stage Manager Jared Halsell
Assistant Stage Manager Valeria Aviña

THE PLAYWRIGHT

“As a playwright, songwriter, editor and translator living between many cultures, including inherited ones, the idea of departure has always been not only an actual or metaphorical basis for writing the work, but also an idea made manifest through the enactment of writing, its performance, and my living of it. Born in the US of Cuban-Argentine-Spanish-Croatian parents, I have felt in a strange kind of exile even while growing up as an “American.” This sense of dislocation extends to the fact that as a child and adolescent, I lived in several states: Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Florida, North Carolina, Utah, New York, and California, not to mention many cross-country road trips in between. The nomadic strain was thus instilled in me and has become an inevitable part of my writing vision. Explorations of wanderlust, dispossession, biculturalism, bilingualism, construction of identity, and the many different emotional terrains that can be inhabited onstage form the basis of my plays and other writing projects. Visions of migration (both physical and spiritual) dominate the plays, which have become, in turn, documents of internal diasporas. As a playwright, songwriter, editor and translator living between many cultures, including inherited ones, the idea of departure has always been not only an actual or metaphorical basis for writing the work.”

~Caridad Svich in “Visions of Migration” Performance Research
Welcome to a play about moving forward after everything that has happened. Welcome to a play-conversation where everyone has a small role to play, even you. Even if you sit here in silence, we’re putting our faith in you to listen and share this moment with us.

If this pandemic has reinforced anything for me, it’s our interdependence on each other and our planet. Even though health orders have forced us to isolate, we’ve noticed more than ever, we are not alone, we are actually all in this together as a society. And we all have a small role to play in how we move forward.

Admittedly, last summer I felt overwhelmed, lost, and uninspired to plan for this production on Zoom. And even now, it can be so hard to continue working when an estimated 2 Million+ people have died in the pandemic and the suffering only continues to grow. But in my fellow theatre artists, I see an unwavering belief in the power of gathering people together to plant a seed of inspiration within our hearts.

I feel our world is in need of some radical healing and change, so I asked many of my classmates, “Do you believe theatre can change the world?” And while some took longer than others to admit it, every one of my colleagues eventually came to a similar answer, “Yes, it changed me. It can change some people. And some people can change the world.”

The determination of my colleagues here at UCSD and Caridad Svich’s words shifted something in me. They gave me a way to look forward that I didn’t know could exist anymore.

We are gathering tonight to share Svich’s words with you, but just as much we are gathering to see each other, listen to each other, and maybe imagine something different for our collective needs.

Thank you for being here, despite every overwhelming thing that could make you want to isolate, or disconnect, or disengage from each other and the work we might need to do together as a society. Your presence here matters and we’re ready to share a moment with you.

Cambria Lorene Herrera is a first-year MFA student from Garden Grove, California. They were most recently based in Oregon, where they co-founded and facilitated The AGE Theatre Collective to empower the resiliency of Portland’s female and non-binary artists of color. Selected credits: World Premiere Adaptation of King Arthur at Long Beach Opera (Assistant Director), Yellow, Yellow, Yellow at Red Balloon Theatre Collective (Director and Co-producer) Romeo and Juliet at Penguin Productions (Director), Peter/Wendy at Bag&Baggage Productions (Tiger Lily), As One at Portland Opera (Assistant Director), and The Balkan Women at George Fox University (Director, awarded Meritorious Achievement by Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, Region 7). Cambria is a graduate of George Fox University, where they earned their BA in Theatre, and an AGMA Union Member. Full resume/portfolio at cambriaherrera.com
Leovina Charles is a first-year MFA student. Born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, she discovered her love for acting at a young age, making her professional theatre debut as Young Nala in The Lion King on Broadway. Graduating summa cum laude from Howard University with a BFA in Musical Theatre, Leovina is also an alumna of The Maggie Flanigan Studio’s 2-year Meisner Conservatory, and has studied at the British American Drama Academy (BADA) in Oxford, England. Select credits: Ismene in I Am Antigone (Theatre for a New City), Clytemnestra in Oresteia (BADA), Young Brooklyn in Brooklyn (Howard University), and Passing Strange (Howard University).

Sabrina Liu is a first-year MFA student. She is originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and holds a BA in Government and Psychology with minors in Inequality Studies and Theatre from Cornell University. Cornell credits: The Wolves, Tartuffe, The Awakening of Spring, Bad Jews, Baltimore, Eurydice, Two Truths and Allie, The Devil’s Pink Cloak (staged reading), and The Wrong Place: Or, How Not to Write a Play About the Rohingya Genocide (staged reading).

Natalia Quintero-Riestra is a second-year MFA Acting student. Originally born and raised in Miami, FL, she graduated with a BFA in Performance from Florida International University. Natalia credits her passion, warmth, and joyful personality to her Cuban, Colombian, and Spanish roots. UCSD credits: Letters from Cuba (Enriqueta), Orestes 2.0 (Nurse 3). Regional credits: The 4208 Group’s Ten Minute Taste Festival, Old Globe’s New Powers New Voices Festival, La Jolla Playhouse’s WOW Festival, City Theatre’s Summer Shorts (U/S). FIU credits: The Suicide (Masha Lukianovna), A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings (Elisenda), She Kills Monsters (Evil Gabby).

Taiwo Sokan is a first-year MFA Acting student. She was born in Nigeria, raised in New Jersey and holds a BA in Theatre Arts from the University of Pennsylvania. She has worked extensively in Philadelphia as an actor, stage manager, and theatre technician. Regional: Marry, Marry, Quite Contrary (Paper Dolls Ensemble), Operation Wawa Road Trip, Fly Eagles Fly (Tribe of Fools), The Bluest Eye (u/s, Arden Theatre Company), All Well That Ends Well (University of Pennsylvania), No Exit (Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble), Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat (Limelight Theatre Company) Tour: Peter Rabbit Tales (Enchantment Theatre Company), Devised: Naked Knotted Neurons (UPenn Players ). An experienced deviser, she has also premiered works with Tribe of Fools, Paper Doll Ensemble, and the UPenn Players, the latter of which premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Valeria Aviña Valeria Aviña (Assistant Stage Manager) is a fourth-year undergraduate Theatre major. Originally from Los Angeles, she received her associates in Film and Theatre from El Camino College while also working as a stage technician for El Camino College Center for the Arts. Since transferring to UCSD, Town Hall will be her second show she’s worked on following Company 157’s Songs For A New World (Flashlight Operator).
The Creative Team cont.

Allison Bailey (Production Stage Manager) is a second-year MFA student. Originally from Iowa, she earned her BA in Political Science with minors in Theatre Arts and French from Coe College. Following graduation, she taught in Bulgaria and then worked in community outreach in Vermont, where she also freelanced as a technician and stage manager. UC San Diego credits: As You Like It (PSM), Orestes 2.0 (ASM), Man in Love (ASM). Other select credits: Blithe Spirit (ASM), Merrily We Roll Along (PSM), Evita (SM), Grey Gardens (PSM), Victor/Victoria (ASM), Burlington Fringe Festival (ASM), and the Off-Center for the Dramatic Arts Spring Open Artist Showcase (Festival Production Manager).

Harrison Foster (Lighting Designer) is a second-year MFA student. He holds a BFA from Point Park University in Pittsburgh. UC San Diego credits: Orestes 2.0 (ALD), Man in Love (ALD). Other select credits: Red Hot Patriot and Abandoned Way Out West (Creede Rep); Cornell Vet Dance Collective 2019 and Empire Burlesque Festival 2019 (Hangar Theatre); Winter Dance Concert (Pittsburgh Playhouse) Assistant credits: The Who's Tommy (Pittsburgh Playhouse).

Jared Halsell (Assistant Stage Manager) is a first-year MFA student originally from Ione, CA. Prior to moving to San Diego, he attended Folsom Lake College where he also worked at The Harris Center for the Arts (formerly Three Stages) as a stage technician from 2011 – 2016. He recently graduated from San Diego State University in 2019 with his Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts. UC San Diego credits: Virtual production of Heap (ASM; 2020). Select credits include Spring Awakening (PSM; 2014), The Who's Tommy (PSM; 2016), Anna in the Tropics (PSM; 2018), James and the Giant Peach (ASM; 2019), To Be Alive: A New Musical (PM & PSM; 2019), The Old Globe’s premiere of Almost Famous: The Musical (SM Intern; 2019).

Zoë Trautmann (Costume Designer) is a first-year MFA Costume Design Student. She is originally from Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas and holds a BA in Theatre Design/Tech from the University of North Texas. Was most recently employed as an Assistant Costume Designer for Uptown Players in Dallas, TX. Selected costume design credits include: Sweeney Todd (Music Theatre of Denton), The Humans (Denton Community Theatre), Nathan the Wise (University of North Texas), New Choreographers Concert 2018 & 2019 (UNT), Steel Magnolias (DCT), Summer and Smoke (UNT).

Michael Wogulis (Scenic Designer) is a first-year MFA scenic design student from Laguna Beach, California. He holds a BA in both Theatre and Communications from UC San Diego, having graduated in June of 2020. UC San Diego credits include The Nether (Scenic Design) Mr. Burns: A Post Electric Play (SD), Much Ado About Nothing (SD), Dry Land (SD), Our Town (SD), Balm in Gilead (ASD), Peer Gynt (ASD), and A Raisin in the Sun (ASD).

Salvador Zamora (Sound Designer) is a first-year MFA student, born and raised in Southern California. He holds a BA in Interdisciplinary Computing and the Arts Major from UC San Diego. UC San Diego credits: Letters from Cuba (ASD), Balm in Gilead (Sound Coordinator), Classical Women (SD & Composer), Joshua (ASD, WNPF ‘18).
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