CORNERSTONE THEATER COMPANY PRESENTS

36

YESSSES

A VISITING PLAY AT THE ODYSSEY THEATRE
December 8-18, 2022

Written by
MICHAEL JOHN GARCÉS

Directed by
SHA CAGE
**Director’s Note**

When we ask provocative questions about the nature of the thing we are creating and the ways it serves us, and those we serve, we are entering an incredibly vulnerable space. So much so that the process of inquiry can easily reveal parts of ourselves that we may or may not be ready to face. That is what 36 Yesses does. It purges complex matter forth and we have no other choice but to move through it. The murky-ugly-grey-tattered-torn-shimmery-and-resonant parts that trace a lineage of 36 years of sweat, laughter, tears, heartache, heavy lifting and celebration. It sounds nostalgic and I imagine it is for some. And for others, it is a cauldron of jambalaya with some identifiable ingredients and alongside ones whose flavors are prominent but whose names escape us. It is reflective beyond words. To look back on a journey, on one’s life and choices and know that no one word could ever encompass that trek. To sift through the cycle of questions that always end up back at the center. To weigh the pros and cons of …showing up, committing to the creative process, to the humans who believe in us and holding the fragility and muscular weight of their stories in a way that speaks fully to their lived experiences. It’s not easy and it has never been pretty. I doubt that was what Michael Garcés was aiming for. Instead he’s given us something meaty and complex to wrestle with. Something that might easily be interpreted in 36 different ways ;). But it is undoubtedly revealing, necessary and hopefully cathartic.

What a pleasure to join Cornerstone Theater as the newest ensemble member. I’m honored to helm this production as director and thankful that you’re joining us on the remainder of this journey towards YES!

**Playwright’s Note**

“There are things that can only be understood retrospectively, when many years have passed and the story has ended. In the meantime, while the story continues, the only thing to do is tell it over and over again as it develops, bifurcates, knots around itself. And it must be told, because before anything can be understood, it has to be narrated many times, in many different words from many different angles, by many different minds.”

-Valeria Luiselli, “Tell Me How It Ends”

“Sabía poco, pero al menos sabía eso: que nadie habla por los demás. Que aunque queramos contar historias ajenas terminamos siempre contando la historia propia.”

-Alejandro Zambra, “Formas de volver a casa”

“...when grief weights you like your own flesh
only more of it, an obesity of grief,
you think, How can a body withstand this?
Then you hold life like a face
between your palms, a plain face,
no charming smile, no violet eyes,
and you say, yes, I will take you
I will love you, again.”

-Ellen Bass, “The Thing Is”
CORNERSTONE THEATER COMPANY PRESENTS

36 YESSES

Written by
MICHAEL JOHN GARCÉS

Directed by
SHA CAGE

Scenic Designer
ANDREA HEILMAN

Costume Designer
JEANETTE GODOY

Lighting Designer
GEOFF KORF

Sound Designer
JOHN NOBORI

Production Stage Manager
MARIA V. OLIVEIRA*

A Visiting Play at The Odyssey Theatre

36 Yesses is made possible in part by grants from the Annenberg Foundation; the California Arts Council, a state agency; California Community Foundation on behalf of LA Arts Recovery Fund; California Nonprofit Performing Arts Grant Program; California Office of the Small Business Advocate; California Venues Grant Program; Capital Group; Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture; Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs; the Mellon Foundation; the National Endowment for the Arts; the Muriel Pollia Foundation; the Shubert Foundation; the Trout Lily Fund; the Kathryn Caine Wanlass Charitable Foundation and U.S. Small Business Administration Shuttered Venue Operators Grant; and generous donations from numerous individuals.
Cast
(IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)
Marcenus M.C Earl*
Peter Howard*
Bruce Lemon Jr.*
Page Leong*
Kenny Ramos*
Bahni Turpin*

Running Time: 90 minutes

Time and Place:
here and now

Production Team

Production Manager
Benajah Cobb
Assistant Stage Manager
Rebecca Bermudez
Puppet Designer
Lynn Jeffries
Projection Consultant
Tom Ontiveros
Associate Sound Designer
Noe Valenzuela
Master Electrician
Curtis Scheu
Wardrobe Supervisor
Eva Zapata
Production Assistant
Luciana Valero
Costume Construction
Nasira Elias
Electrician
Leo Korf
Electrician
Clayton Currie
Scenic Painter
Nadia Reed
Projection Titles
E. G. Bailey

*Appearing through an Agreement between Cornerstone, and Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

• A Union member of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC).
**Bios**

**Nephelie Andonyadis+** is a scenic and costume designer who’s been part of Cornerstone since her first “yes” – the company’s production of *Sid Arthur* in collaboration with the community of Watts, in 1995. Her son was born in 1996 and she’s been a member of the ensemble since 2009. She’s grateful for the journey.

**Rebecca Bermudez** (Assistant Stage Manager) is a first-generation Chicana who loves making art and telling stories. Theatre has taught her that saying yes can not only be hard at times but also terrifying. She says “Yes” to doing one last production in Los Angeles before a new adventure in Texas. Yes to life, change, growth, yes to scared, and it’ll all be ok.

**Sha Cage+** (Director) said yes to Cornerstone in 2021 as the inaugural Lloyd Richards New Futures fellow. A writer, director, actor and filmmaker she’s directed, written and has been featured in works with 20th Digital/Disney, Black Star Studios, The Guthrie, Penumbra, The Jungle Theater, MN Children’s Theater, and Arkansas Rep. She says YES to a future of work that speaks to/with/for/and through the community. www.shacage.com

**Juliette Carrillo+** first said yes to Cornerstone in 1994. A director, playwright and filmmaker, she has written and directed plays for the Los Angeles River community, Watts, the addiction & recovery community, Salinas farmworkers, Hindus, the Venice, CA, and Flushing, Queens NY communities. She teaches at UC Irvine. www.juliettecarrillo.com

**Benajah Cobb** (Production Manager) started working with Cornerstone in 1986 as technical director and actor, and married co-founder Alison Carey in 1990. Since 1995 and 1996 he has been father to Emma and Elijah, two of the best Cornerstone yesses ever. Since 2007, he has worked with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s Green Show.

**Paula Donnelly+** (Director of Engagement) Saying yes to Cornerstone since 1998 brings discovery and inspiration in my life and lets me be in conversation & collaboration with amazing people. Grateful for the art, the process and connection.

**Marcenus M.C. Earl+** (Actor) is from Watts, California, where he first said yes to Cornerstone in 1994, and he’s been onstage in at least 20 Cornerstone plays since, as well as AMERYKA with Nancy Keystone and Critical Mass. M.C. earned his B.F.A. in Acting from USIU San Diego.
Michael John Garcés+ (Playwright) I’ll always be grateful that I had the opportunity to leap into the unknown and say yes to Cornerstone when I was at a point in my life when I was looking for connection to community. While it has not always been easy (“yes” rarely is), it’s always been right.

Michael Garcia+ (Associate Producer) Cornerstone said yes to me in 2014 when I first joined the company as an intern. Since then, all of my yesses back to it have led to many ineffable, indelible moments - big, small, momentous and fleeting - and the totality of these impressions governs my values in theater and art.

Jeanette Godoy (Costume Designer) holds an MFA in Theater-Acting & Costume Design. For 12 years she’s said YES to the transformative work of Cornerstone. Her Community Actor to Theater Colleague journey wouldn’t exist without the love and support of each of these talented and beautiful souls, past and present. Honored & grateful. Follow her work via IG @misskahlo.

Andrea Heilman (Scenic Designer) works on many projects, from independent films to site-specific theater to more traditional work. Favorites: Cymbeline at CLU, where she is the head of design and production. The Brothers Size at the Guthrie Theatre; The Arsonists in Cairo; & Yellowman at the Chance Theater. They are grateful for the opportunity to say yes.

Peter Howard+ (Actor) has found that saying YES is a lot less scary and a lot more fun when you say it with generous people who delight and inspire you. He is grateful to all of the colleagues and community folks who have brought their stories and their wisdom to Cornerstone’s work over the past 36 years.

Nikki Hyde+ is a stage manager and Cornerstone ensemble member. Saying yes to a production internship 17 years ago and to stepping into the Production Stage Manager role on CTC’s production of 3 Truths set her on a career and life path for which she is deeply grateful.

Lynn Jeffries+ (Puppet Designer) designs puppets, sets and costumes, and has lost count of the Cornerstone productions she has worked on since June 30, 1986. She has said “yes” thousands of times. Also, “uh-oh!” and “wow!”.

Geoff Korf+ (Lighting Designer) first said “Yes!” to Cornerstone in 1992 and became an Ensemble member in 1996. Geoff was born into membership of the Korf Family Circus in 1960. Nowadays, Geoff teaches Lighting Design at the University of Washington in Seattle.
Shishir Kurup+ playwright, director, actor, musician, composer and filmmaker, collaborator and mentor, has been vital to >30 productions over 30 years with Cornerstone. He’s worked with Silk Road, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Lark Rising and other theaters, and has acted in many television and film projects. His greatest yes is Tala, his daughter.

Bruce Lemon Jr.+ (Actor) is delighted to understand what it took for our entire ensemble to say “Yes”, when asked if he could come play with them full time. Consensus is NOT easy to come by. Saying yes to Cornerstone has led to more yeses than he could ever imagine. More yeses to come.

Page Leong+ (Actor) said yes to Cornerstone 29 years ago. Yes to 70 CTC plays as actor, director, playwright, and choreographer. Recent yeses include films Daisy, in which she plays the title role, and dramedy Dealing With Dad. Page was nominated for a 2022 Drama Desk Award for her performance of “My Documentary” in Out of Time at The Public Theater.

John Nobori+ (Sound Designer) is a proud ensemble member of Cornerstone Theater Company. He has been a practicing theatrical sound designer and composer for 18 years, saying “yes” to designing his first show for Cornerstone in the summer of 2008.

Maria V. Oliveira (Stage Manager) is a freelance actor, stage manager, and Life Activation Practitioner. She has been working with Cornerstone sporadically since 2017 when she attended UC Irvine. She continues to say yes to Cornerstone because of the people. The collaboration, storytelling and dedication to communities makes each production unique, expansive and engaging.

Tom Ontiveros (Projection Consultant) I say ‘yes’ because Cornerstone raises the stakes and the bar in a world of performance that so often needs to be recalibrated to reflect who we are as artists, as citizens, as humanity. I am the Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of La Verne.

Bahni Turpin+  (Actor) had never thought about Community Based Theater before saying YES to Cornerstone in 2005. CTC roles include Demeter in *Demeter in the City*, Melba Pattillo in *Warriors Don’t Cry*, Cleodora in *3 Truths*, & Prosper in *California: The Tempest*. Working with CTC has revealed how much good can be done through theater and inspired Bahni to start SoLA Food Co-op.

Luciana Valero  (Administrative Associate) Saying yes to Cornerstone has been a big highlight of my year. This “yes” means having the opportunity to work in a field that I am passionate about, with a company & a group of artists that I admire. I’m immensely grateful that Cornerstone trusted me and said yes to me, too.

Noe Valenzuela  (Associate Sound Designer) is a Mexico-born, California-raised first-generation immigrant with art in his blood. A passionate musician, composer, and “audio guy,” he is excited and proud to be giving his first “yes” to Cornerstone.

Megan Wanlass+  (Managing Director) said yes to being an arts administrator 22 years ago as the Executive Director of SITI Company and 9 years ago to join Cornerstone as the Managing Director. Megan says yes to fundraising, budgeting, producing, marketing, communications, board relations, program and staff management, strategic planning and so much more every day!

Eva Zapata  (Wardrobe Supervisor) is a costume design MFA candidate at UCLA. She grew up in West Siberia, but now takes on various roles in theatrical productions, film, and television projects around greater Los Angeles. This is her first “yes” to Cornerstone!

+ indicates a member of Cornerstone’s Ensemble, the evolving group of people at the artistic heart of this theater company creating through conversation, play, compassion and consensus.
Special Thanks


Board of Directors
Erica Blumfield
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Geoff Korf
Shishir Kurup
Bruce Lemon, Jr.
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John Nobori
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Megan Wanlass

Staff
Paula Donnelley, Director of Engagement
Michael John Garcés, Artistic Director
Michael Garcia, Associate Producer
Bruce Lemon Jr., Associate Artistic Director
Luciana Valero, Administrative Associate
Megan Wanlass, Managing Director
**Production Notes**

As a part of the creation process of this production, community interviews were conducted with the participation of: Annie Yee, Blanca Gutierrez, Ceci Dominguez, D’Lo, Elodia Honigstein, Emma Cobb, Frank Ayala, Frank Boeheim, Gema Sanchez, Jataun Valentine, Jeanette Godoy, Juanita Chase, Karen Covarrubias, Loraine Shields, Michael Mejia, Natalie Venegas, Neetu Badhan-Smith, Nicole Wong, Olusheyi Banjo, Sue Montoya, and Tracey Turner. We are grateful for their generosity.


“Truth to Power”. Composed by Shishir Kurup.

Cornerstone Theater Company operates under an agreement with Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers. Actors’ Equity Association (“Equity”), founded in 1913, is the U.S. labor union that represents more than 51,000 professional Actors and Stage Managers. Equity fosters the art of live theatre as an essential component of society and advances the careers of its members by negotiating wages, improving working conditions and providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. Actors’ Equity is a member of the AFL-CIO and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. #EquityWorks

Due to union regulations the use of cameras or recording devices of any kind are not permitted in 36 Yesses. There should be no recording of any kind either audio or video, and the taking of photographs, with or without flash, is strictly prohibited for reproduction purposes.

Sha Cage is a member of SDC (Stage Directors and Choreographers Society), the theatrical union for directors and choreographers.
Props, costumes and scenic elements from across Cornerstone’s production history are used in 36 Yesses. These are the shows that they’re from:

Rolling Black Dentist Cart is from Norcatur, KS, and has been with Cornerstone since 1987.


Clapper Sticks, from Urban Rez (2016). Tongva Artisan: Craig Torres.


Cornerstone Theater Company acknowledges our presence primarily on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Gabriélino/Tongva peoples, the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (Los Angeles basin, South Channel Islands). We pay our respects to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), ‘Ahiihirom (Elders) and ‘Eyoohiinkem (our relatives/relations) past, present and emerging. We are grateful for Indigenous nations’ stewardship of the places we call home.

Cornerstone Theater Company collaborates with communities. Our work reflects complexity, disrupts assumptions, welcomes difference, and amplifies joy. We aim to advance a more compassionate, equitable, and just world. By combining the artistry of people with many levels of theatrical experience, we act upon the conviction that artistic expression is civic engagement and that access to a creative forum is essential to the wellness and health of every individual and community.

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