



ILLINOIS THEATRE PRESENTS

PLUMAS NEGRAS

BY JULIETTE CARRILLO

Directed by Marie Ramirez Downing
Friday–Saturday, April 11-12, 2025, at 7:30pm
Wednesday–Friday, April 16-18, 2025, at 7:30pm
Saturday, April 19, at 2pm
Studio Theatre

ART BY SOFIA SAAVEDRA BARRIENTO

WELCOME

Welcome to the Illinois Theatre 24-25 Season! We are so delighted that you are joining us. This season, we present dynamic new voices, fantasy-fueled adaptations, and a Shakespearean romantic adventure. Each year, our faculty and students work together to consider a range of works for our season that will provide rich educational opportunities as well as meaningful experiences for our audiences. We hope you'll enjoy our selections this season and engage with us throughout the year.

We'll start the season with a reading of the brand-new play *No Puedo, I'm Sorry* by Ariel Cipolla, our Daniel Sullivan Playwright-in-Residence. We first encountered the Miami-based, Mexican-Argentinian playwright when our students presented his bold, interactive *So You Think You Can Stay?* at the Armory Free Theatre last year. We're so excited to introduce you to him.

Promoting the development of new work through the Daniel Sullivan Playwright-in-Residence program and the Theatre Studies New Works Project gives our students, faculty, and our audiences the opportunity to hear from emerging and diverse theatre-makers. We get to help give shape and bring to life ideas that might otherwise be left unformed, unheard, and untested. These projects offer a laboratory for playwrights and their creative teams to take risks both in terms of the creation process as well as the form.

Two fantastical adaptations take center stage in the fall. First is Sarah Ruhl's poetic reimagining of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* in the Studio Theatre at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. This will be followed by Kate Hamill's spectacular version of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* at the Virginia Theatre. Careening from horror to hilarity, Hamill's *Dracula*,

A Feminist Revenge Fantasy, Really is sure to enliven the downtown theatre in November.

Our students will have the wonderful opportunity to work with Guest Director Bill Kincaid on Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* in the spring. Kincaid, a specialist in performing Shakespeare, brings considerable knowledge, experience, and a fresh approach to the Bard as we return to the Colwell Playhouse in April. Check out his book, *Performing Shakespeare Unrehearsed: A Practical Guide to Acting and Producing Shakespeare Spontaneously* (2018) for a peek into Kincaid's process.

Our last work of the season, the magical realist *Plumas Negras* by Juliette Carrillo, combines magical realism and historical events in Salinas, California as we follow three generations of women struggling to keep their dreams alive.

We are especially indebted to our donors, Friends of Illinois Theatre, who help make our productions possible. We thank you!

Thanks to you all for joining us to dream, remember, and imagine new worlds. We look forward to seeing you all year!

—Valleri Robinson, Head, Department of Theatre

—Thom Miller, Producer, Illinois Theatre

PROGRAM

ILLINOIS THEATRE

PLUMAS NEGRAS

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Directed by Marie Ramirez Downing

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Saturday, April 19, at 2pm

Studio Theatre

Part 1: 1963

Part 2: 2010

Part 3: 2013

This performance contains mild profanity, depictions of sexual assault, and other adult themes.

Supported by the Anda New Works Theatre Production Endowment

Special thanks to the students of Marie Curie Metropolitan High School:

Nadia Avalos, Alexander Avila, Kyah Brown, Kye Bryant, Alexa Bucio, Jakub Bukowski, Alyssa Calderon, Alison Cajamarca, Lailoni Carrasco, Demaujae Chaffin, Carlee Coleman, Lauren Croswell, Bibi Colin, Jayda Colocho, Bryseida Diaz Valencia, Mateo Delgado, Angel Dominguez, Jayda Dominguez, Sabas Estrada, Delani Flores, NadiaH Flores, Iliana Fraga, Faith Garcia, Fernanda Garduno, Victoria Gonzalez, Takayla Harris, Gabrielle Holmes, Madilynn Hope, Tyrice Hunt, Veronica Ibarra, Bryan Lagunes, Nathaniel Larios, Amelie Maya,, Makaylah McDonald, Issac Mendez, Yailene Morales, Jazlynn Moreno, Eileen Najera, Daphne Padilla, Austin Rancatore, Jocelyn Reyes, Charlie Salazar, Homero Salazar, Michael Salazar, Veida Salto, Belinda Saucedo, Aschar Smith, Naydelin Soberanis, Bella Torres, Marisol Valencia, Valentina Vazquez, Melanie Vega, Jayden Velazquez, Deigo Victoria, Damian Zavala

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



BRENDA & STEPHEN PACEY

PLUMAS NEGRAS

PLAYWRIGHT

Juliette Carrillo

DIRECTOR

Marie Ramirez Downing

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Toyosi Tejumade-Morgan

CULTURAL CONSULTANT/ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Sofia Saavedra Barriento

SCENIC DESIGNER

Reiko Huffman

COSTUME DESIGNER

Stephanie Spotts

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Jasmyn Oliveros

SOUND DESIGNER

Daniella Brown

FIGHT DIRECTOR

Zev Steinrock

STAGE MANAGER

Anna Compton

DRAMATURG

Yiqi Zhang

MEDIA CONTENT CREATOR

Wesley Lu

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

As a new assistant professor and one of the resident directors at Illinois Theatre, I was invited to direct this beautiful play not knowing I would find such a deep connection to it. After reading *Plumas Negras*, I was immediately drawn to the women in the story, being of Mexican heritage myself and because many generations of my family worked in the fields of California. My parents, the Ramirez and the Cervantez families picked grapes in Fresno, California. (The Raisin Capital of the World). My mom grew up in the fields with her 11 siblings—all working and helping my grandparents in any way they needed. It was hard labor and not always the best conditions. When she was a teenager, she would make it a game to race her brothers and sisters to see who could pick the row of grapes the fastest. This was their community and family time; long days in the hot sun of the San Joaquin Valley.

My parents' first language was Spanish, and they were born in the 1940s. At that time in the United States, they were all told to assimilate for their own safety and well-being. My father changed his name from Jose to Joe and told stories of getting his hand slapped in school for speaking Spanish and being told to "Speak English!" Because of this, he would only speak English to me and my four siblings, but it was truly "Spanglish." Similarly in the play, the language shifts for the three generations of women in the three different periods in the play. The dialogue begins in Spanish, then moves to Spanglish and finally the youngest generation in the play speaks mainly English. Personally, I have chosen to have my children learn Spanish, and they have been in Spanish immersion since they were in pre-school. So, they, my sons 11 and 14 (the youngest generation) are now the fluent ones! As the cast and I exchanged stories, there were similar

experiences from the actors and other immigrant stories that have guided us in telling an authentic narrative that we are all deeply linked to and proud of.

A strong theme in the story is family legacy and heritage and breaking away from what is familiar or expected so the next generation can grow and change. The character of Aurora is the brightest in her class and trying to go to college and has big plans for her future that don't involve manual labor and picking lettuce. She is a single mom of 18, and she asks for help from her family as she raises her child and attends school, but they don't understand why college is necessary because they are in "survival mode." "How could there be more than working and providing for the family?" This is the story of many first-generation college students (myself included) who are hungry to discover something new for their future and seek a way out of the cycle they are born into. They want an education, and they want their families to support them, but often they are seen as going rogue and betraying the family for wanting something different. I relate. Going to college and leaving my home came with a lot of painful change, fear, and misunderstanding from my parents. Through the years of my education and career, I stand proud to give a voice to my family and my community and shed light on their lives through plays like *Plumas Negras*. I dedicate this production to my parents, Helen and Joe Ramirez. Thank you for your hard work in the agricultural community and our household and for finally, like Aurora, approving of my choice to want something different and given the opportunity to achieve it

—Marie Ramirez Downing, Director

CAST

CONCHA

Laney Rodriguez

PERLA

Melíza Gutierrez

AURORA

Avery Luciano

REBECCA/ROSA

Angela Tomaso

JUNIOR

Luke Russell

ALEX/ELEUTERIO

Heraldo Herмосillo

MUNDO/ROGELIO

Fabian Guerrero

VIRGILIO

Mihir Apte

MS. BROWN

Julia Clavadetscher

WIFE CROW

Riley Starr McLean

HUSBAND CROW

Jimmy Cone

DRAMATURG'S NOTE

Plumas Negras is a play about memory, heritage, and letting go. Through the perspectives of three generations of female workers—Concha, Perla, and Aurora—we witness the lives of Mexican immigrants in the Alisal (or East Salinas) region, where people have struggled their whole lives so that following generations might have a brighter future. Playwright Juliette Carrillo blends Native American folklore, Aztec beliefs, real-life events, generational struggles, and ancestral legacies into a compelling magical-realist narrative. At the heart of this innovative storytelling lies the black feathers, or *plumas negras*—the essence of the play and its namesake. These feathers symbolize ancestral and cultural memory, which, along with the love and struggles of each era, are lost, abandoned, and rediscovered across generations.

Concha's family's stories unfold in the lettuce field from 1963 to 2002 and into 2023, but we shall see a broader time and world behind. *Plumas Negras* leads us to a living exhibition where countless Mexican memories speak to us. In those farmworkers' hands, there are short-handled hoes that made them spend hours hunching over in the field; above their heads, there are airplanes spraying pesticides that caused them to suffer from chlorine poisoning; on the road, there is the unregulated makeshift "bus" that endangered their lives in road kills; and under their clothes, there are unforgettable marks of physical and mental violence and abuses. Beyond those elements are not just events, there are patterns of exploitation and struggle the Mexican community has suffered. We should never forget that we, like Aurora in the play, are standing in the "future" for which our ancestors strived. Only by rediscovering their circumstances and understanding the struggles they made would we be able to reconnect with them and reclaim our own heritage.

Staging *Plumas Negras* is an exploration and a tribute to the history and struggles of the Mexican and Latinx communities on this land. It serves as a reminder of their resilience and contributions, ensuring their stories are not forgotten or denied. Let us remember and let us be aware. We must revisit the past and connect with the present, see the threats to immigrant communities, and reflect on what we might do to ensure a brighter future—in which our ancestors may let go and fly. Maybe the next time we see crows circling overhead, we might consider what they would say:

"This land doesn't belong to anyone."

"We belong to the land."

—Yiqi Zhang, Dramaturg

—Madeline Santori, Assistant Dramaturg



Marie Ramirez Downing

(Director) is Assistant Professor of acting, voice, and speech in the Department of Theatre at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is also a professional voice, text, and dialect coach. Recent credits

include *Inherit the Wind* (Goodman Theatre, 2024), *Leroy and Lucy* (world premiere, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, 2024), and *Sunny Afternoon* (North American premiere, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, 2025). She is currently Voice and Text Director at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) for Lisa Peterson's production of *As You Like It* (2025). Marie also teaches voice and text at Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, Massachusetts for their professional actor training intensives. Marie is one of the resident directors at Illinois Theatre. Previous directing credits include Lin-Manuel Miranda's *In The Heights* (Sonoma State University, 2023); *Real Women Have Curves* (6th Street Playhouse, Santa Rosa, California, 2022); and Quiara Alegria Hudes' *Water by the Spoonful* (Sonoma State University, 2022), for which her production received many commendations regionally, an invitation for encore performances, and two national awards from the Kennedy Center for "A Brave Rehearsal Space," and a "Citizen's Award." She is a member of the Voice and Speech Trainers Association (VASTA) and most recently co-presented and contributed to a new heightened text database at the Leeds School of Arts, United Kingdom entitled, "Expanding the Canon: A Searchable Online Database of Playscripts in Heightened Language by BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and global playwrights" in October 2024. As a scholar, she contributed a chapter called "Performance of

Identity, A Practice" in the new book *Latinx Actor Training*, published by Routledge in 2023. Marie has coordinated, written, and taught in many innovative theatre and voice courses for the California State University (CSU) Chancellor's office Summer Arts Festival and Program. These include "Theatre and Social Change: Politics, Performance, and Vocal Power," "Performance of Identity: Past and Present Voices Meet," "Latinx Voices on Stage: Community Lineage and Performance," and her latest course "Shakespeare & Company: Voice, Heritage, and Community" in July 2024. As an actor, Marie worked with Patsy Rodenburg on *Shakespeare's Sonnets* at the National Opera Center in New York City in 2022 and has been invited to perform some of Shakespeare's scenes in Silves, Portugal in September 2025. She has an MFA in acting from the Theatre School at DePaul University, and a BA in theatre arts-acting from California State University, Fresno. She is a Designated Linklater Voice Teacher via Kristin Linklater and the Linklater Center for Voice and Language in New York City.



Born into a multicultural household, surrounded by her Mexican-American father's exquisite figurative paintings and her Jewish mother's creative life choices (She's a Democratic Socialist who lived with a female partner sixteen years her junior, for example), **Juliette Carrillo** was encouraged to conceive adventurous alternatives for her life and live with authenticity. Family friends say she built little fantastical worlds with people and objects from a very young age, so one could argue she found her path as a theatre artist quite early.

A graduate of the Yale School of Drama, Juliette engages in a variety of generative practices with freshness and an air of discovery. As a regional theatre director, she has staged award-winning, critically-acclaimed new plays and revivals in some of the nation's top theaters, including Center Theater Group, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Arena Stage, Yale Repertory, Seattle Repertory, and Denver Theater Center. She is known for skillfully developing new works and has directed countless workshops in regional as well as New York City theatres such as The Public, New York Theater Workshop, INTAR, and The Women's Project. Juliette served as Artistic Associate at South Coast Repertory Theatre for seven years, where she directed regularly in their season and ran the Hispanic Playwright's Project, collaborating with such notable Latino writers across the country as MacArthur Genius Luis Alfaro, Pulitzer Prize winner Nilo Cruz and Oscar-nominated Jose Rivera. A founding member of Latinx Theater Commons, Juliette is deeply engaged in, and committed to, the Latinx theatre community.

Known for stunningly visual, highly physical, and emotionally powerful theater, Juliette is often spoken of as an artist who consistently elicits cathartic responses from her audiences. The most common adjective used in reviews is "sensitive." *The New York Times* quoted her direction of Octavio Solis's *Lydia* as "Seductive and strong . . . directed with enormous skill and knowing compassion." Critic Peter Marks of the *Washington Post* recently tweeted, "Please, artistic directors, put Juliette Carrillo on your list of 'directors I need to hire.'"

A longtime Cornerstone Theater Company ensemble member, Juliette has collaborated with and celebrated diverse communities throughout California and beyond, with a commitment to bring voice to the voiceless. Working as both a

writer and director, she has partnered with East Salinas farm workers, seniors and their caregivers, a Hindu community, the addiction and recovery community and the Los Angeles River community, as well as geographical communities such as Pacoima, Watts and Venice in Los Angeles.

Juliette continues to challenge herself to explore and expand as a writer, not only working as a playwright, but also writing for audio-theater and film. The American Film Institute selected her for their highly esteemed Directing Workshop for Women, where she wrote and directed her first short film *Spiral* which played in film festivals across America and Europe, garnering multiple honors. Her subsequent screenplay, *SuperChicas*, was invited to participate in IFP's highly competitive Emerging Narratives at Independent Film Week, and her acclaimed short film, *a-littera-tion* took home multiple awards at the Honolulu 48 Hour Film Project including Best Overall, Best Writing, and Best Acting.

Juliette is the recipient of several awards, including the prestigious NEA/TCG Directing Fellowship and the Princess Grace Award. Nominated for the Alan Schneider Award six times and finalist for the Zelda Fichandler Award, she is currently in consideration for the United States Artist Fellowship. She was also chosen by Sundance Theater Institute to participate in the Sundance/Luma Foundation Theater Directors' Retreat in Arles, France. She is on faculty at University of California, Irvine.



Mihir Apte (Virgilio) is a current sophomore BFA acting major at the University of Illinois. He is from Overland Park, Kansas, and is currently in his mourning period after the Super Bowl. His previous Illinois Theatre credit is in *Dracula, A Feminist Fantasy, Really* (Miller/Merchant). He would like to

thank the his roommates for letting him whoop them in FIFA every day and the Apte family for their constant support.



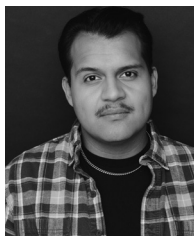
Julia Clavadetscher (Ms. Brown) (she/her) is a fourth year acting major who is also pursuing a minor in business. Julia most recently was seen as Mina in *Dracula, A Feminist Revenge Fantasy*, *Really* at the Virginia Theatre. She has also

been in *Urinetown* (Hope Cladwell), *Coriolanus* (Volscian Soldier #1), and *I Wish* at CU Adventures in Time and Space (Cinderella). She has also done work in the Armory Free Theatre. You might have seen her in *Hurricane Diane* as Carol or in *Macbitches* as Piper.



Jimmy Cone (Husband Crow) (He/Him) is a senior in the BFA Acting Studio at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. His credits with Illinois Theatre include *Plumas Negras* (Husband Crow), *I WISH: An Escape Room* (Milky White),

The Gangster Play: Circus/Circus (The Company), *Witch* (Frank Thorney), *The Realness* (Ensemble), *Close* (The Close Show Host), *Urinetown* (UGC Exec, Cop), and *The 48* (Borachio). His credits with Lyric Theatre @ Illinois include *Oklahoma!* (Dream Curly). His film credits include Netflix's *The Twister: Caught in the Storm*, *A Picture-Perfect Welcome at Illinois*, *Progress Isn't Quiet at Illinois*, *Twas the Night Before Finals at Illinois*, and 2022's Voices of Memory Project, in collaboration with the University of Illinois Humanities Research Institute. Jimmy would like to thank his wonderful family, friends, faculty, and the creative team for all of their love and support and is thrilled to share their work with you!



Fabian Guerrero (Mundo/Rogelio) (he/him) is an alum of the Illinois Theatre BFA program (Class of '21) delighted to return to the striking Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. Film and television credits include

Haunted House of Pancakes, *Chicago Fire* (NBC), and *Final Summer*. Theatre credits include *Que Te Vaya Bien* (Subtext Studio Theatre Company), *Macbeth* (Milwaukee Shakespeare), *Last Stop on Market Street* (Young People's Theatre Chicago), *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice* (The Gift Theatre), and *Romero* (Steppenwolf LookOut Series). Represented by Grossman & Jack Talent.



Meliza Gutierrez (Perla) (she/they) is an actor, playwright, and poet from Southern California. She received her BA in drama with honors in acting from the University of California, Irvine. They are currently an MFA candidate in

acting at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where they have appeared as Volumnia in *Coriolanus*, Joanne in *RENT*, Contestant Two in *So You Think You Can Stay?*, *the sound of a match striking* in *The Gangster Play: Circus/Circus*, Olivia in *No Puedo, I'm Sorry*, and Marianne in *Constellations*. Regional credits include Notre Dame Shakespeare's *Hamlet 50/50* as Susana and *As You Like It* as Phebe. Instagram: @melizakg Website: www.melizagutierrez.com.



Heraldo Hermosillo (Alex/ Eleuterio) is a junior acting student. He recently performed as a member of the chorus in Illinois Theatre's production of *Orlando* and as Tracy in the Station Theatre's production of

70 Secrets of Marmalade Kittens. Originally from the city of Guadalajara, capital of Jalisco, Mexico, Heraldo immigrated from his home city to pursue a BFA in acting at the University of Illinois. His Guadalajara credits include Linus in *Eres bueno Charlie Brown* and Kamilo in *Turisttoocc*. In his spare time he does drag. His drag persona, Lydia Rina, can be found twirling around house shows and parties as well as clubs in the Guadalajara night scene when he's back home.



Avery Luciano (Aurora) (she/her) is a third-year undergrad acting student. She was recently in a devised production called *Neofuturists: 30 plays in 60 minutes* at the Armory Free Theatre. Avery was in Illinois Theatre's

The Gangster Play: Circus/Circus (Company), *Witch* (Winnifred), *The Realness* (Prima Understudy and Ensemble), and *The Birds of North America* (Celia).



Riley Starr McLean (Wife Crow) (She/Her) is in her third year as an acting major at the University of Illinois. Her previous credits in Illinois Theatre productions include *The Gangster Play: Circus/Circus* (Company Member/

Maggie) and *Dracula, A Feminist Revenge Fantasy, Really* (Renfield Understudy). Outside of Illinois Theatre, she has also acted with the Bristol Renaissance Faire in *RenQuest* (Cicely Ringer), Flyover Film Studios in *Tears to a Glass Eye* (Young Caroline), *The East Patch* in *R.O.T.* (Abaca Whistle), *The Necrosis Haunted House* in their 2024 season (Lacey the Doll) and more. She occasionally acts as a cast member of the Champaign-Urbana Theatre Company's *Seven Corpse Murder Mystery* troupe. Aside from

theatre, Riley is one of the official Game Masters for the U of I's Metagamers club and pursues a passion for folklore and creative writing.



Laney Rodriguez (Concha) (she/her) is honored to be joining Illinois Theatre in this compelling production of *Plumas Negras*. Laney is a Cuban actress, teaching artist, and movement director originally from Miami, Florida.

She is a third-year MFA candidate in acting at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and received her BFA in acting from Florida International University. Illinois Theatre credits include: Queen/Chorus and Movement Captain in *Orlando*, Narrator in *I Wish*, Ali/Vendor/Mimi's Mom in *RENT* and Menenius in *Coriolanus*. Armory Free Theatre credits include Ensemble in *30 Plays in 60 Minutes* and Contestant Four in *So You Think You Can Stay?* Notable South Florida theatre credits include *Everybody* (Somebody), *Tres Hermanas* (Olga), *Sonnets for an Old Century* (Cordelia), and *Right You Are, If You Think You Are* (Mrs. Sirelli). Big thanks to all the artists who made this production possible! All the love and dedication to my family, friends, advisors, and teachers. Patria y Vida! Libertad para el pueblo Cubano. Dedicated to immigrants, the backbone of this country. <3 www.laneyrodriguez.com/@laneyrodz



Luke Russell (Junior), a dedicated theatre student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, is making his mark at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. Since launching his acting journey in 2018, Luke has taken on 18 diverse roles, showcasing his versatility and passion for storytelling. Beyond the stage, he

channels his creativity into singing, rapping, and writing poetry, talents that add depth to his performances and connect him with his audiences. Luke's love for dance further complements his expressive artistry. Known for his leadership on campus, he inspires peers and brings energy to every project he undertakes. Luke's dedication to the arts and his community reflects his commitment to growth, both as a performer and as a role model for aspiring artists around him.



Angela Tomaso (Rebecca/Rosa) (she/her) is a third-year BFA acting major with a minor in communications. She has previously been seen on the Illinois Theatre stage as a Company Member and Deviser in *The Gangster Play: Circus/Circus*.

On campus, Angela is a troupe member of Odd Request Improv and a cast member at Illini Student Musicals, where she has been seen in *9 to 5* (Doralee), *The Prom* (Kaylee), and *Grease* (Patty Simcox). She also works as a professional Disney Princess character performer at My Party Princess and throughout the Chicagoland area. Instagram: @angela.tomaso



Toyosi Tejumade-Morgan (Assistant Director) (BA Hons., MA) studied and taught theatre arts at the University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria. She specializes in directing, social justice theatre, and criticism. In 2019, she created Theatre Maniacs,

which specializes in productions of theatre for social change employing a mix of the African Total Theatre with western performance aesthetics. Her experimental play *I Won't Mind My Business* was commissioned for fringe performance at the British Council/Lagos Theatre Festival. She advocates for

revolutionary theatre to jolt the status quo. She is a recipient of the 2021 Andrew Mellon Interseminar Fellowship from the Humanities Research Institute at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is a fourth-year PhD candidate in theatre studies.



Sofia Saavedra Barriento

(Cultural Consultant/Artist in Residence) has been awarded an IIE Artist Protection Fund Fellowship and is in residence at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is a researcher, painter, muralist,

and performer on focusing on Identities, nomadism, and diversity. She serves as Director and teacher of the digital school of free arts *Identidades Nómadas*. Sofia received a degree in painting from the Universidad Nacional y Experimental de las Artes (UNEARTES); a diploma in Art Applied to Society at Uberbau-House São Paulo, Brazil; and an IIE Artist Protection Fund of New York 2024-2025 grant.

A researcher who reflects on human diversity, recognizes identity as a dialogic and intersubjective construction between the individual and the collective, Sofia is a cultural activist who is committed to art as a place of political expression. She is currently researching the proposal "Crossing to the Dreams (a home in transit and a ritual of nomadic identities)" creative process in the art studio at Siebel Center for Design.

Sofia Saavedra's work has been exhibited at the 1st and 2nd International Painting Exhibition in Tijuana, Baja California, CECUT, Mexico 2021-2022 / 2024-2025. She has exhibited in Mexico, Argentina, Spain, France, Venezuela. Her work *La Línea Fronteriza (The Border Line)* was awarded an honorable mention in the Tijuana Triennial, 1st International Pictorial Baja California, CECUT, Mexico 2021; she was also selected for the 2nd

International Pictorial Triennial of Tijuana, Mexico 2024 with the work *Intimidación Volátil*, a pictorial installation. Group exhibition *Body; public space / private space*, Museo Alejandro Otero, 2023. Solo exhibition "Mujeres pájaro" Transmutación de un vuelo: Sueños y libertades como espacios, Casa Galería JoJo, Puebla, México 2022 . Boom Art Community Group Exhibition, Madrid, Spain, 2021–2022.

Collective Exhibition D Contemporary Artists "Veredas del Arte" Semaine de l'Amérique Latine et des Caribes en France. Curated by Thamara Bryson, Mai-Juin 2021. Exhibition The Feminist Subject, It Matters; dialogues on the impact of feminist art in LatinX and Latin American Art, USA, California Calart 2020. Solo exhibition "Nomads" in Argentina, San Luis, Merlo. Poeta Agüero Museum. Government of Merlo. September 2019. Córdoba City. Buenos Aires. Casa Desaim Cultural Center.Palermo. November 2019 Artistic residency of the Talleres Continuos de Arte (TAC), project "Nómadas urbanos". Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2019.

Daniella Brown (Sound Designer) (she/her) is in her second year pursuing her MFA in sound design and technology. She is excited to join Illinois Theatre again after designing *Dracula*, *A Feminist Revenge Fantasy*, *Really* this past fall. Upcoming credits include *The Commupance* (Human Race Theatre Company, Dayton, Ohio) and *Primary Trust* (Hope Repatory Theatre, Holland, Michigan). Daniella is honored to be part of the creative team for *Plumas Negras*, a powerful work that weaves together the voices and histories of her community. Her work is profoundly influenced by the rhythms of her upbringing in New Mexico. Daniella dedicates this show to her mother.

Anna Compton (Stage Manager) (she/her/hers) is a second-year stage management MFA candidate at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

She earned her Bachelor of Science in theatre arts from Grand Valley State University in 2023. She is a multidisciplinary theatre artist who enjoys working with a diverse range of production styles. She is passionate about collaboration and innovation in theatre processes. Her biggest supporter in life is her cat, Oliver, who deserves the entire world and more. Anna is particularly excited to be working on *Plumas Negras*. As a stage manager, she believes her job is to help develop and deliver underrepresented stories, and she hopes *Plumas* will be a prime example of the way that theatre can connect and inspire. Some of her recent theatre projects include *The Tempest*, directed by Scott Harman; *Gloria*, directed by Diane Machin; and *Dracula, A Feminist Revenge Fantasy, Really*, stage managed by Gabriela Mendoza and directed by Latrelle Bright.

Inspired by the exploration of collaboration, **Reiko Huffman** (Scenic Designer) (she/her/hers) is a theatrical scenic designer and educator who is studying the messy parts of both worlds in order to discover what it means to collaborate in technical theatre. Currently an assistant professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, her interest was sparked by the paradox of theatre claiming to be a collaborative field, but without the proper processes to support it. Therefore, she combines her design experiences research into collaboration in order to better understand how our work is informed by our identities. Our design choices are inarguably informed by our current and past experiences, by sifting through these uncomfortable characteristics, we are reminded that successful design is a result of authenticity and being a good collaborator requires everyone to embrace what makes them human. Huffman's goal is to bring forward more unconventional ways of collaboration that allow us to find innovation outside of the processes that have always existed. This means prioritizing people and their stories above simply spectacle.

Once we begin to divulge into selfless theatre practices can our designs uplift communities that need them most. Reiko Huffman is excited to be working on *Plumas Negras* and upcoming credits include *The Black Pearl* at Coastal Carolina University in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and *Finding Nemo* at The Rose Children's Theatre in Omaha, Nebraska.

Jasmyn Oliveros (Lighting Designer) is a third-year undergraduate student from Berwyn, Illinois. She is pursuing a degree in lighting design and technology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Her design credits include *Lyric Under the Stars*, *Spring Senior Thesis Concert*, and *Carnaval!*

Stephanie Spotts (Costume Designer) is a second-year graduate student pursuing her MFA in costume design. Her previous credits include assistant costume designer and wardrobe supervisor for both *The Realness* (Illinois Theatre) and *I Wish* (CU Adventures in Time and Space and Illinois Theatre collaboration). Prior to coming to University of Illinois, Stephanie designed the costumes for *Eleemosynary* at Purdue University Fort Wayne, where she earned her BA in theatre with a concentration in design and technology. At Purdue Fort Wayne, Stephanie had the honor to be the only student in a decade to have their work chosen to be put on stage. This is Stephanie's first design at the Krannert Center, and she looks forward to designing more shows that delivers a resonating message to its audience.

Zev Steinrock (Fight Director) is a fight director, intimacy director, teacher, and performer, currently serving as Assistant Professor of acting at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He holds certifications from the Society of American Fight Directors and Intimacy Directors & Coordinators and is a recipient of the Paddy Crean Award and Darrel Rushton Teaching

Award for his contributions to the field of stage combat. Zev's research into trauma-informed choreography practices is being presented to professional fight directors all over the country. National fight and intimacy direction credits include South Coast Repertory Theatre, Paper Mill Playhouse, Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival, Arkansas Shakespeare Festival, The Williamston Theatre, and Definition Theatre Company. Steinrock holds degrees in acting from Michigan State University and the University of Illinois.

Yiqi Zhang (Dramaturg) (he/him) is a second year theatre MA student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics and computer science from the U of I in 2022. As a scholar and practitioner with an interdisciplinary academic background, his studies and work focus on the space and time, technology, and spectatorship in theatre and performances, exploring how performing arts could serve as alternative ways of communication. He is currently developing *Where Time Quakes*, a performance project investigating the performativity of retrospection, memories, and histories. *Plumas Negras* marks Yiqi's first experience working as a dramaturg in an Illinois Theatre production. He is particularly excited about this work, believing that the play invite us to recollect with generational memories from the past and reflect on our perspectives and decisions in the very present.

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As a land-grant institution, the University of Illinois has a particular responsibility to acknowledge the peoples of these lands, as well as the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution. We are also obligated to reflect on and actively address these histories and the role that this university has played in shaping them.

This acknowledgment and the centering of Native peoples is a start as we move forward.

Krannert Center affirms the commitment by the university to move beyond these statements, toward building deeper relationships and taking actions that uphold and preserve Indigenous rights and cultural equity.

As we gather to experience this performance, we have an opportunity to reflect on the ways that systems of oppression have shaped our society. We can work together to create systems that support human dignity, establish equity, strengthen cross-cultural relationships, and draw upon the creative capacity of all people that make up this community, state, nation, and world.

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