

# **The Terrifying: A Look into The Representation of Latinos**

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## Artistic Aims

Part of my job as an actor is to set goals and hopes for myself throughout each acting endeavor I decide to pursue. With my senior project, my hope is that through this process I become a stronger actor, which will end up helping me in the future. I have always felt that one of my biggest issues has come from a lack of confidence in my ability as a performer, and that is something I want to tackle during this project, because greater confidence would have made many performances of mine that much better. To supplement this goal, I wish to tackle the difficulty I have with line memorization. In retrospect, being off book has always been a challenge for me, partly due to my ADHD, which makes concentrating on a task difficult. The best way I am working around this, though, is with the help of the stage management team giving me line notes at the end of every rehearsal, so I can work on being word perfect, and I'm also taking the time to practice with line exercises.

The toughest part about playing Vosha in *The Terriying* by Julia Jarcho is going to be fully delving into what it's like to be a kid again. I've never played a character that was younger than I am, let alone a thirteen-year-old. I'm focusing on pushing myself, especially when it comes to expressing my character through my body. There are times on stage when I perform that I don't feel as grounded as I should or could be. With that being said, I have been working on incorporating exercises like increasing body awareness via meditation as well as vocal projection exercises, and I have learned from classes in movement and vocal exploration to assist with this. I would also like to incorporate techniques that I have learned from Fundamentals of Acting such as body exercises that allow for actors to walk and talk as their character as well as character desire games.

I am also looking forward to working alongside director Janos Boon and taking an in-depth look into how their directing style is going to push and challenge me as an actor. Just knowing myself, I know that I am the type of actor that may need a little more direction than

other actors. I would definitely like to be pushed beyond my limits as an actor, which is what I need now to be able to keep up with the professional world. Another thing that I want to be able to work on is my ability to better connect with my character, because it's always been a struggle throughout the rehearsal process. For this show, I'm going to have to work on connecting to two different things, the world that the play is built around and how my character operates within that world. The hardest thing about connecting with my character is going to be figuring out what my character's motivations are throughout the greater plot of the play, not just on a scene-to-scene basis. As far as how my character interacts with the world around him, I want to put a focus on Vosha's relationships with Raymour, Pewter, and Annaliese. Moreover, I would like to investigate Vosha's relationship to his mother and how he continues to deal with trauma as the story progresses.

One of the biggest questions that I have had going into this project is how can I best make this project an important step towards my actual career post-college? This has not been an easy question to tackle, let alone devise a plan for. I think that with keeping this in the forefront of my mind, this project is giving me a platform in which I can display everything that I have learned in both my acting experience and in techniques that have been taught to me. In a way, I feel like this project is my final chance to prove to myself that I have the drive, talent, and wherewithal to make a career in an industry where the odds are stacked against me at every turn, as well as being able to make career out of doing something that I love. Something that genuinely makes me happy. At the same time, I feel that it's also interesting to point out one of the most important pieces of advice I have ever been given by a professor. The advice came from the late Charles Tuthill while I was in his Acting Scene Study class. His advice to me was, "If you're not fully committed to your craft, whatever it might be, then what is the point of trying to make a career out of it." I think this project is the opportunity that I need to prove that I made the right choice of a career path.

At the same time as discussing what potential this project could have for my goals post-grad, I feel like an important aspect of being an artist is taking into account the impact the art you are bringing to life will have on the audience and community attending the show. With that in mind I thoroughly believe that *The Terrifying* is a show that we need now. Moving away from its literal narrative, *The Terrifying* is an opportunity to make a statement about mental health, racism, and classism that are happening in American society today. I'm excited to explore how classism and racism are a part of my character's journey, seeing that he is on the poorer side of his village and is very much an outcast amongst his peers. There are a lot of parallels that can be drawn between the personalities/actions of the characters and politicians today. For example, an idea that was discussed in rehearsals is that Soren's character Cloris had a lot of similarities to Donald Trump, not just in his actions but his demeanor as a character. One of the main issues this play tackles is professional integrity, and to what length we as individuals will go to gain notoriety. This can clearly be seen in Nickel throughout the piece when his lines mirror Annalise's more than once and during his monologue towards the end of the show where we learn that he has been typing on a typewriter the whole time. As for my character "Vosha," he represents how we treat children in today's society. With all of that being said, what better place to put up a show that challenges your audience intellectually and makes them take an introspective look at their own personal ideals about politics, gender identity, trauma and mental health than Purchase College. With the slogan of the college being "Think Wide Open," it was only fitting that as artists we challenge that motto and push the limits of comfortability to bring a story to life that is true to who we are. On top of that, what sets us apart from a lot of senior projects that have gone up this semester is our commitment to tackling a multitude of issues in a way that supplements the over-all plot of the show.

An issue that I would like to address in this project is how growing up white-passing in some communities can be very alienating and how that concept, which is very personal to me, can be accurately portrayed through my character's journey. Growing up in a town that was predominantly white was difficult for me as a child. Being a light-skinned Latino, I was always too "ethnic" for the white kids and too "white" for the other students of color. Going through this made me feel detached from my peers and as a result led me to not having a large friend group. The thing that was the most confusing for me as a kid growing up was that when I looked in the mirror, I saw the same thing that I saw when I looked at other Latino kids. So why did I feel so different even though I knew I was the same? It wasn't until I started to grow older that I started to see how Latinos were being represented in today's society, especially in theater. As a grownup, I now recognize that I wasn't the only one experiencing this type of alienation even from peers in my own culture.

Reading through *The Terrifying*, I connected to Vosha's struggle to fit in and be accepted among his peers. Throughout the piece, Vosha continues to try to gain Raymour's respect and friendship, even though Raymour looks down on him for being "different." Not only that, but Vosha's relationships with other characters really stuck out to me and I started to notice this general theme of him being an outsider. I took this a step further in my exploration with this character and stumbled upon a question that started nagging me. "If this is how the characters that we see feel about him, how do the people who are unseen in this world also feel about him?" It's very clear through context clues within the show that Vosha doesn't have a lot of friends, probably due to fact that he is not "normal" and can be slightly agitating. Taking all of that into consideration, I came to the conclusion that both I and my character share something in common, a longing to be accepted among our peers.

My hope every time that I perform is that the audience leaves with a hunger to further their own intellectual journeys on issues that were addressed during the performance. I am

always for educating the audience, rather than making them feel like they are stupid. With these personal sentiments, I hope the type of impact we leave on our audience is one of addressing fundamentally wrong issues and begging the question of what the audience member can do to stop racism, classism and discrimination against people with mental health issues from being perpetuated. On top of that, I hope that our senior project production raises the bar of creativity and challenges future senior projects to take the message the we were trying to convey and see how they may do it better.

## Technical Essay

Now that *The Terrifying* has concluded its run at SUNY Purchase, I feel as though it's important for me as an artist to reflect on what I have accomplished as well as what I still need to work on. As a whole, the show received positive reviews when it came to the acting but mixed reviews when it came to the content within the show. The fact that the audience needed to take some time after the show and really think about what the piece of theater meant is a sign that I as an actor did my job correctly. As an ensemble, we pushed ourselves toward the goal of presenting this piece of theater in a way that sparked conversation about the issues of race and mental health within America. As an actor, I strive to create challenging performances that start conversations because I want to encourage people not to be afraid about having difficult discussions about parts of our society that are inherently problematic, such as racism, classism, and the ignorant refusal to acknowledge mental health issues in this country. Overall, I feel like I grew exponentially as an artist throughout this process, and I accomplished the goals that I set forth for myself at the beginning. There are things that I wish had gone differently, but that's only natural when reflecting on a project.

Looking back on the production side of the creative process, we as a senior team of six wanted to use this show as a starting point to talk about difficult topics in our society. The play itself takes an in-depth look into issues of mental health, draws parallels to today's political climate, and also examines questions of professional integrity. We were so excited about getting to work on a piece that had the potential to talk about so much, that it ended up talking about too much and not having a clear message. For instance, there was no clear definitive statement of "Here are the things that we want to convey to our audience"; it was more like "Here are all of the things this play talks about both on the surface and deeper, so let's talk about all of it." I've noticed this being a common trend with powerful pieces of theater at Purchase, and as an actor it's confusing not having a concrete theme to portray throughout a piece. One of my main worries going into this senior project was that there were way too many ideas about what we should say with the project and that there were too many people making



creative decisions. I think one of the hardest setbacks that we faced throughout the rehearsal process was having to re-cast Raymour at the beginning of this semester. It was hard because after getting used to acting with one actor's version of a character, you kind of have to throw out the relationship that you've built and start from square one. And especially since it happened later in the process, it just added an additional level of stress about how the final product was going to turn out.

Those weren't the only ups and downs for me during the creative process of this show. With the lack of clarity about what we were trying to say with the production as a whole, I noticed that the rehearsal process suffered as well. For me specifically, I had the most difficult time connecting with my character because for the first five months there was little to no discussion of character work and the only thing that we focused on was blocking. I had difficulty making solid character choices because the blocking would change completely every week or so. There was also an undertone of hostility from certain production team members within the rehearsal space that did not provide an environment in which I felt comfortable enough to focus solely on my acting. It seemed as though there was such an emphasis put on how we as a collective should assist in creating a space where everyone felt like they could express themselves but the moment that any disagreement happened there was immediate hostility met by some of the production team members. As we started tech, I found that we finally addressed character development changes for Vosha that should have been worked out during the rehearsal process, and these late alterations confused me. Ultimately, these continuous last-minute changes hindered me from giving the best possible performance I could.

Though there were challenges during the process, when we finally got down to doing character work, I started to gain more clarity as to who my character was and how he operated in relation to the world of the play. Upon a further dive into the play, I found the social issue that I wanted to base my character on, which was how white passing people of color get treated within their respective communities. This issue is very close to me because I grew up in a place where I wasn't accepted into the Hispanic community because I looked too white and I wasn't accepted in the white community

because I was too “ethnic.” I chose to display this conflict in how Vosha interacts with characters that were both seen and unseen. For example, we wanted to get across the key point that Vosha wants to be accepted by Raymour, whom he looks up to as an older sibling, but Raymour only hangs out with Vosha out of obligation. This conflict is also displayed in Vosha’s relationship with his mother, which I chose to display through how he reacts when he talks about her with Pewter, as well as how he reacts outside his house to the conversation with Raymour.

I was proud of how well I was able to tackle the goals I had set for myself in my artistic aims. One of the goals that I am the proudest of accomplishing is proving not only to my family and friends but myself that I am ready to tackle acting as a professional career. Looking to the future, I’m very excited that I found a career that I genuinely love, and Purchase facilitated an environment for me to further explore my interest in acting and inevitably help me fall in love with it. Going into this project, I put a lot of pressure on myself since this was my final chance to prove myself, and at the end of it all I came out on top. Another important goal that I accomplished was being able to fully connect with Vosha even with there being such a big age difference between my character and myself. This was a big concern of mine because prior to this show I had never played a character this young. After playing such a young character, I noticed that there is a certain level of innocence towards the world that we lose as we grow into adults. Actively trying to tap into that innocence was challenging but also gave me a new view on how to not view the world through such a pessimistic lens.

All in all, we really came together as an ensemble and put forth a product that everyone was extremely proud of. We wound up selling out 3 out of 4 shows, which is such an amazing achievement. There were a lot of ups and downs when it came to creatively putting up this show, but at the end of it all we left our hearts and souls on stage and that’s what matters the most. I have benefited so much as an actor from this experience. The most important result of this project was accomplishing the goals that I had set forth for myself throughout the rehearsal process and performance.

The Performances themselves went extremely well. I feel as though I really accomplished all of the goals that I had set forth for myself when I comes to script analysis and character development. I think what I'm most proud of is the fact that I walked away closing night knowing the acting on stage is here I belong and I wouldn't trade that feeling for the world

## Research

Although American culture perpetuates a number of Latin stereotypes, throughout the years there have been Latin actors who have been successful in combating these stereotypes and the prejudices faced by the Latin community. In this paper, I will create an in-depth examination of three actors from three different eras and show how they demonstrated a variety of strategies that can be used to deconstruct stereotypes in television, on film, and on stage, while also illustrating the evolution of Latino representation in American culture. To do this we have to understand a few key terms. The first is “stereotype.” According to Bradley W. Gorham of the University of Wisconsin, “Stereotypes are often viewed as false overgeneralizations made by socially dominant groups about socially oppressed groups, and since they have been prevalent in the media to varying degrees for many years (Stroman, Merritt, & Matabane, 1989–1990), they must be bad” (Gorham 1). Whenever people think of the word stereotype, it is always synonymous with something negative that a certain group of individuals does. Using the Latin community as an example, some of the most common stereotypes are that Latinas don’t have control over their tempers, all Latinos have big families, and all Latin men have “machismo pride.” All of these are just not true.

Taking these stereotypes into account, it’s important to define what the Latin community is in America. According to the Joint Economic Committee Democrats, “the term ‘Latino’ refers to persons who identified themselves as being Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino” (Heinrich 1). In the United States, Latinos are one of the largest demographics today. “Latinos continue to be one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States, and account for a combined \$1.3 trillion in economic activity” (Jiménez 1). Latinos contribute much to American society today. The Latin community statistically is more likely to become entrepreneurs than the general population of America. “Latinos also own 3.3 million businesses in the United States, accounting for almost \$500 billion in economic activity annually” (Heinrich 2). Given all of this information about the Latino community, I’ve always wondered why there has been a lack of accurate representation when it comes to Latinos in film, T.V.,

and theater. I've also wondered if the Latino community has actively fought against the stereotypes that are being portrayed. To create a better understanding of the topic, it would be wise to start looking at an actor who rose to the spotlight during one of the most racially contentious times in United States history: Desi Arnaz.

Desi Arnaz rose to fame in one of the most trying times for people of color in the United States. The 1950s were racially contentious because around this time segregation and blatant racial discrimination against minority communities came to a head and as a result spawned the civil rights movement. "The Southern civil rights movement that we knew in the years between *Brown v. Board of Education* and the election of Ronald Reagan was a political movement that grew from and within the rich soil of personal meanings... It was almost certainly an undiluted force for good" (Dunbar 1). During this time period, Latinos from other countries—like Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic—had started to immigrate to the United States in an attempt to start a better life. Even though this was a very racially charged time, the Latino community actually benefited from the nation's political climate. "Wherever there are crops to be tended or construction laborers needed or meat processing assembly line workers wanted or yard workers for suburban lawns and college campuses—wherever, in short, there are low wage jobs to be had" (Dunbar 2). Through all of this, Desi Arnaz chose to support himself through the entertainment industry because with the immigration of Latinos to America came the introduction of Latin entertainment. "The Latinos have brought with them their festivals, music, grocery stores. They have brought new strength to the Roman Catholic Church, and to Pentecostal Protestant ones too" (Dunbar 3).

Desi Arnaz started his career in 1939 when he starred in the hit Broadway musical *Too Many Girls*. Later that year, when he moved to Hollywood and starred in the film version of *Too Many Girls*, he met Lucille Ball. In October 1951, he co-starred in the hit T.V. show that would make him a household name, *I Love Lucy*. In this show, Desi Arnaz would change how Latinos were perceived in the '50s and beyond. According to the cultural scholar Frances Negrón-Muntaner, "He demonstrated

that Latinos were not only capable of excelling in acting and singing, which are considered ‘physical’ talents, but also of producing, innovating media forms, and building history-changing media companies, all skills deemed cerebral” (Ferriera 1). The sheer fact that Arnaz was a Cuban actor playing a lead character who was also Cuban had a major impact on the Hispanic community he represented. Arnaz in the show played Ricky Ricardo, a Cuban native that moved to the United States to start his own music band. Through his portrayal of Ricky Ricardo, Arnaz improved the general image of Hispanic people in the 1950s. Muntaner argues, “In a way, Desi Arnaz expanded how a Latino could be seen and ‘softened’ the image of Latinos by showing that they could be part of American middle-class life” (Ferriera 2). Additionally, the show never made the fact that Ricky was Hispanic the butt of any jokes. “The show did a great job at avoiding ethnic jokes of any kind, even though Lucy still poked fun at Ricky’s accent” (Ferriera 3).

On top of all these amazing accomplishments as an actor, Arnaz also pioneered the way we enjoy modern T.V. While he was working on, *I Love Lucy*, he oversaw certain aspects of the show’s production, including coordinating how to film a sitcom in front of a live studio audience using the newly invented method of three camera set up. As one Hollywood insider quoted in a PBS tribute to Arnaz said:

“Bless Desi Arnaz for creating [the] three camera,” remarked filmmaker Penny Marshall, whose career is indebted to Arnaz’s advances in television production. “You could find out what’s funny or not with an audience. They’re faster than anything” (Pioneers of Television 1).

This approach to filming was something that was unheard of at the time because films and T.V shows were only shot with one camera. “Arnaz said that when he first sat down to watch the film, he found it very confusing to look at only one camera’s footage on a Moviola. He asked... ‘Why can't you just stick three Moviolas together?’” (Elrick 1). This set-up and style of filming came with challenges, though. The director of the first season, William Asher, was very strict about the way things were run

with the show as a whole. “We had stops for Lucy's big costume changes, but that was all,” Asher said. “I had a pretty strict rule on that. We didn't stop for anything. We played it like a Broadway show. If an actor made a mistake or forgot a line or something like that, it was up to the other actor to get him out of it.” (Elrick 2). Desi Arnaz was ahead of his time and his accomplishments and legacy have gone down in history has one of the most influential Hispanic entertainers ever.

Following Arnaz’s amazing accomplishments, it’s fitting that we take a look at how Latino representation continued forward in history and what better time to look at then the 1990s. It may come across as surprising but representation for non-white people in media across the nation wasn’t very good following Arnaz’s career. “In both television programming and commercials, studies show that less than 10% of human appearance time includes any non-Whites, and most of these are African Americans, leaving Latinos and Asian Americans almost invisible” (Coltrane and Messineo 1) In fact a study conducted in 1998 by Scott Coltrane of the University of California and Melinda Messineo of Ball State University Concluded that “ Black men are routinely shown as aggressive, and Latinos, soon to be the largest ethnic minority in the nation, remain virtually invisible.” (Coltrane and Messineo 2) What’s even worse was that even when Latinos where getting roles in television and advertising, they were being forced to accept role that perpetrated stereotypes. This continual exclusion of minority groups from leading roles the main stream media would continue to promote discrimination against minority groups. “Exclusion of Asians and Latinos, and denial of romantic and domestic fulfillment to African Americans, encourages viewers of television commercials in all audience categories to withhold positive emotions toward outgroup members.” (Coltrane and Messineo 3) Though through all of the discrimination that was going on in the media in the 90’s, there were actors who worked to put an end to how the public viewed Latinos. John Leguizamo was one of those actors.

John Leguizamo started out performing stand up in New York City in 1984 before landing his T.V. debut in a small role on the hit T.V. show Miami Vice. Soon after that he landed roles in hit movies like *Mixed Blood*, *Casualties of War*, and *Die Hard 2*. Around the time that *Die Hard 2* came

out in 1992, Leguizamo realized that he didn't enjoy play the stereotypical drug deal or terrorist roles that were given to Latino actors around this time. "I didn't want to be a drug dealer and a murderer for the rest of my life. That's not me and that's not my people." (Lopez 1) It was this attitude from Leguizamo that would be the driving force for the rest of his career. In 1991, Leguizamo was given the opportunity to make his off-Broadway debut in his one-man show "Mambo-Mouth". "Agamemnon is a coolly confident talk show host with a hyperactive libido. He is one of seven pungent personalities that populate "Mambo Mouth," John Leguizamo's wry passage through the aspirations and frustrations of Hispanic America." (Gussow 1). After receiving critical acclaim for the show, Leguizamo decided to double down on his on his approach to addressing Latin stereotypes with "Spic-o-Rama".

As opposed to Desi Arnaz, who refused to make jokes about the fact that his character was Hispanic, John Leguizamo decided to take a more controversial approach and heavily leaned into the stereotypes of the Latin community in an attempt to show how ridiculous these judgements were. His sketch comedy show *House of Buggin's* is a great example of this. The show as a whole took a very satirical approach in its discussion about Racial stereotyping. One of the best skit examples from the show is a sketch entitled *Illegal Alien Makeovers*. "This particular scenario has Leguizamo as a Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous-esque, and very blonde, spokesman named Blaine Alexander hyping Illegal Alien Makeovers, a center meant to "de-ethnify" any person of color to avoid random searches or arrest." (Lopez 2) Many people, especially in the Latin community, saw this as Leguizamo using stereotypes to further his career when in actuality his intention was to raise the question "Why is this so funny, when is so messed up". This wasn't the first time that he tried to raise this question though.

Three years earlier he performed in his second one man show *Spic-o-Rama*, which opened in 1992, at the Westside theater in New York City. The show follows a Dysfunctional Hispanic family preparing for the wedding of the eldest son. Critics feedback about the show was mixed. "Some people don't think they're funny. A few critics have blasted Leguizamo for reinforcing stereotypes, and many



of the people who could afford to pay \$30 to see his stage show were probably laughing at him, not with him” (Garza 1) This was simply not the intention by Leguizamo and his response proved that there was a deeper meaning past the surface level satire of stereotypes. “It’s a raging cultural debate. Leguizamo maintains that his characters are not stereotypes and that his act is integral to cultural survival.” (Garza 2) It’s Leguizamo’s intent on bringing to light how the Latin community survives, that sets him apart from most Latino actors who use stereotypes to make fun of their own people.

This intent can even be seen today in his newest one man show “Latin History for Morons”, which opened in 2016. The show is a satirical ride through history incited by the need to find a Latin hero for his son’s school project. Through his research of history, he stumbled upon a very sad fact:

“I read this article that 45% of Latin kids drop out of high school,” a fact the actor blames on young Latinos never “seeing yourself” represented properly in media. “How do you project yourself into the future...if you don’t learn about anyone that looks like you or is you?” he said.” (Lopez 3)

This is such a true statement, especially since most if not all history classes barely cover anything to do with Latin or Black history, when it is so heavily ingrained in America’s roots. This now brings us to the topic of how Latinos are represented and viewed in today’s media.

To better understand how far we as a society have come when looking at the influences of Desi Arnaz and John Leguizamo, it’s important to understand a few key facts. The first fact is that even today, Latinos remain virtually invisible when it comes to representation in the Hollywood film industry. “Only 3% of speaking characters in 2016’s top 100 films were Latinos, according to a University of Southern California study, even though Latinos comprise 18% of the US population.” (Carroll 1) This absence of representation has led to the inevitable lack of nominations in the acting category of the Oscars. The last Hispanic actor to win an acting award at the Oscar’s was Penelope Cruz in 2009 for Best Supporting actress in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* and the last Latino to win for Best Actor in Leading Role was José Ferrer for *Cyrano de Bergerac* in 1951. At the same time, we

can't ignore the accomplishments that have been made on the production side of the film industry.

“Latinos have made breakthroughs behind the camera, notably the cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki and directors such as Alejandro González Iñárritu (*Birdman*, *The Revenant*), Alfonso Cuarón (*Gravity*) and Guillermo del Toro, whose *The Shape of Water* leads this year's Oscar race, with 13 nominations.” (Carroll 2) All of these accomplishments are great but what is the real reason that we don't see Latinos represented in today's T.V., film and Theater industries?

In trying to understand this question, we have to look at the content being put out today. Edwin R. Ruiz, a cinema production graduate from DePaul university put it really simply when talking about the influence of John Leguizamo's *House of Buggin*:

“It was a whole team of Latinos coming up with all sorts of crazy stuff, and it was hilarious.

They would poke fun of the perception of Latinos, which was huge,” Ruiz said. “To me that was a linchpin moment of, we can be in T.V., we're just not. And if content isn't created for Latinos, Latinos don't envision themselves as actors.” (Hernández 1)

How are we as a community supposed to feel represented when there are zero stories being produced about what I mean to be Latino. One of the biggest advocates for creating stories that Latino's can relate to is actor, writer, and composer Lin Manuel-Miranda.

Since 2008, Lin-Manuel Miranda has written two hit Broadway musicals: *In The Heights*, and *Hamilton: An American Musical*. Both of these stories follow main characters Caribbean descent and display how Latino characters can exist without feeding into stereotypes. “The idea,” Miranda explained in Rolling Stone, “has always been to look the way America looks now, and that doesn't exclude anyone.” (Hispanic Network 1) Being the child of two immigrants, it's no wonder why Miranda would want to create stories that about his people, but how do you act in stories about your community when there are none “ “I don't dance well enough to play Bernardo [of *West Side Story*], or Paul in *The Chorus Line*. And I don't have enough of an operatic voice to play the Man of La Mancha. And if you're a Latino man, that's all you get. I realized that the only way for me to have a

career in this world that I loved, was to write it,” he said.” (Hispanic Network 2). It was this drive that started him on the journey of writing *In the Heights*.

In his process of writing *In the Heights*, the main thing that he wanted to focus on was creating “a Latino storyline in which we never played gang members once” (Hispanic Network 3). This sentiment would go on to win him four Tony Awards, including Best Musical and Best Original Score, for a storyline that followed the average day of Usnavi in Washington Heights, New York. Following the success of this musical he set out to tackle one of the most ambitious projects that he has done to date. Miranda wanted to bring to light the story of a founding father that had been lost through in history. For Miranda it all started with a tweet: “Spent the entire day working on one couplet about George Washington,” reads the 2009 tweet. “Hamilton’s slow-going, my friends, but I promise you it will be worth it. It’s hard converting whole swaths of history into a hot 16 bars.” (Fessler 1) Miranda would later go on to perform the song entitle “Alexander Hamilton” at a private white house event. Before his performance he said to himself”

“I felt like, well, if it doesn’t work in this room, when’s it gonna work? That audience was the first family, the first grandma, Michelle Obama was there, it was like this crazy conference: Here’s George Stephanopoulos next to Spike Lee next to Zach Braff. I thought, if it doesn’t work well here, I’ll put it aside and start something else.” (Fessler 2)

It was that leap of faith that lead Lin to 16 Tony award nominations and 11 Tony wins including Best Musical and Best Original Score.

In conclusion, the issue of how the Latin community is perceived won’t subside until Latinos have stories that for them and that stop perpetrating stereotypes. With the influences of Desi Arnaz, John Leguizamo and Lin Manuel Miranda in mind, The National Hispanic Media Coalition has started a movement in Hollywood to get the attention of the film industry. ““Our upcoming demonstrations are only the first of what will become increasingly aggressive wake-up calls to Hollywood studios to end institutionalized racism against Latinos. By targeting the Academy Awards, we’re serving notice

to the motion picture industry that we're not asking for equity any more. We're demanding it." (Carroll 3). It is my hope that one day The Latino community will get the positive representation that it deserves.

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# Actor's Portfolio

Michael Jorge SUNY Purchase 2015-2019  
Water Girls 2016-Underground Theater



In Order from left to right: Jordan Okrend, Sean M. Harrison, Jovan Tyler Graham. Andira Rodriguez, Sean Church, Kanae Miyahara (Co-Director), Olivia Grady, Kiyuu Kamisawa (Co-director), Cheyenne Myrie(Stage Manager)

Water girls is a story that follows the life of a young Japanese hostess girl in New York City. Throughout the play we see the young hostess girl combat social and political issues.





# In the Heights 2016 - Stood



In order from left to right: Caitlin Sosa (Abeula Claudia), Maghan Baptiste (Ensemble), Winter Muniz (Piragua Guy), Michael Jorge (Ensemble), Lucy De Urqiza (Camila Rosario), Micha Rabang (Sonny), Justin Laguna (Usnavi), Faith Gallivan (Vanessa), Frandy Cisnero (Graffiti Pete), Emma Myers (Carla), Riley Kiggins (Ensemble), Marina Espinet (Daniela), Alejandro Becerra (Kevin Rosario), Rosemarie Albanese (Nina), Tyrone Hodges (Benny),  
Not Seen: Natasha Calixte (Ensemble), Marilyn Hardwick (Ensemble), Gianna Bartolini (Ensemble), Conicha Zorrilla (Ensemble),  
Director: Caitlin Byrne  
Stage Manager: Madison Hartke-Weber, Nick Mendez

In the Heights we follow the story of Usnavi, a Dominican bodega owner, who trying to make ends meet in Washington Height's, New York. Things start to turn around though when Abuela Claudia wins the lottery jackpot. Through all of this Usnavi is faced with the two life altering options which will change his life forever. In this Production I played in the ensemble. I had always wanted to perform in this show am so glade I got the opportunity to at Purchase.



# IN THE HEIGHTS

## Cast:

Usnavi: Justin Laguna  
Vanessa: Faith Gallivan  
Benny: Tyrone Hodges  
Sonny: Micah Rabang  
Graffiti Pete: Frandy Cisnero  
Abuela Claudia: Caitlin Sosa  
Kevin Rosario: Alejandro Becerra  
Camila Rosario: Lucy De Urquiza  
Daniela: Marina Espinet  
Carla: Emma Myers  
Piragua Guy: Antonio Muniz  
Ensemble: Michael Jorge, Riley Kiggins, Maghan Baptiste, Natasha Calixte, Marilyn Hardwick, Gianna Bartolini, Conicha Zorrilla

## Production Team

Director and Producer: Caitlin Byrne  
Musical Director: Ethan Brown-Jones  
Choreographer: Sanina Leilani Clark  
Lighting Designer: Nyle Farmer  
Assistant Director: Madison Hartke-Weber  
Stage Manager: Nic Mendez  
Assistant Music Director: Dan Russo

March 9 @ 6:30pm  
March 10 @ 6:30pm  
March 11 @ 6:30pm  
March 12 @ 4pm



# Bad Jews-2016



In Order from Left to Right: Rob Reddington (Liam), Noelle Miller (Melody), Michael Jorge (Jonah), Sydney Gottesman (Daphna)  
Director: Madison Hartke-Weber  
Stage Manager: Nick Mendez

*Bad Jews* is a dark comedy play, after a beloved grandfather dies in New York, leaving a treasured piece of religious jewelry that he succeeded in hiding even from the Nazis during the Holocaust, cousins fight over the family heirloom.

In this production I played Jonah, The youngest of the cousins. This was my third overall show that I performed in at SUNY Purchase and really appreciated the challenge of playing a character outside of my cast type.

# Orestes 2.0- 2018



Cast: Billy Cosgrove (Orestes), Sacha Stewart-Coleman (Elektra), Drew Burt (Menelaus), Addison Jenkins (Tynadareus), Michael Jorge (Apollo/Farley), Emma Callahan (Servant), Calliope Rae (Nurse 2), Miranda Lyman (Helen), John Sawyer Coffin (William), Frances Pace-Nunez (Nod), Autumn Blazon-Brown (John), Nadia Duncan (Nurse 1), Eleni Anneta (Nurse 3), Cole Ortis-Mackes (Pylades), Kara Kind (Tapemouth)

Director: Gian-Murray Gianino

Production Stage Manager: Liza Kissel

Assistant Stage Managers: Devin McNamara, Sam Robbins

*Orestes 2.0* is an experimental piece that follows the story of Orestes after he kills his mother Clytemnestra. The events of the play take place during his trial for the murder.

In this production I played two different characters, Apollo and Farley. I enjoyed performing in this production because it challenged me to be able to flip between two

characters. The other interesting part of this production was that Apollo is modeled after the current president of the united states who at the time was Donald Trump.





This is Apollo's Monologue as Orestes is about to murder Menelaus' Daughter



D.N.A-2018

# DNA

MAY 3RD, 4TH & 5TH @7:30PM  
BEHIND ADMISSIONS



**THIS EVENT IS PICNIC SEATING, PLEASE  
BRING A BLANKET!**

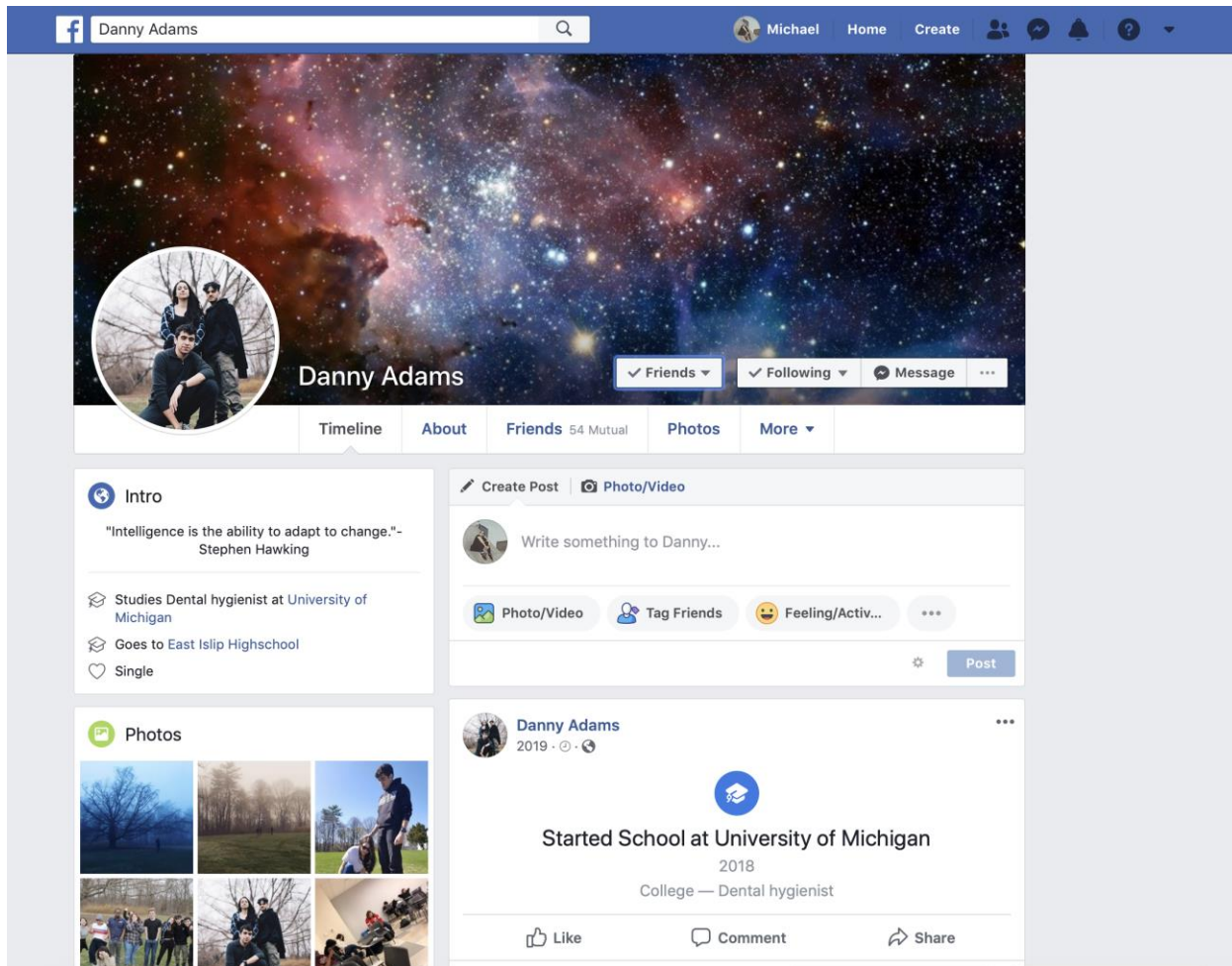
Cast: Jacob Wade (John Tate), Elyssa Elisio (Lou), Jeremy Nunez (Richard), Jack Boggan (Brian), Ashley Driscoll (Jan), Mitchelle Angelo (Mark), Cayliegh Hearth (Cathy), Em Hampton (Phil), Erin Degnan (Leah), Soren Alf Corriea (A Boy)  
Director: Logan Bruner, Jeremy Suarez  
Stage Manager: Lacey Szerlip

*DNA* by Dennis Kelly Follows the story of a group of high school Students who accidentally kill a fellow classmate and have to figure out how to move on from the trauma.



In this production I played the character Danny, who is an aspiring dentist and is a victim of wrong place wrong time. I enjoyed this character the most out of all the characters that I have ever played because it challenged me to connect with a part of myself on an emotional level.





This was part of the marketing campaign that we did where we, the actors, created a social media world around the show to build up hype.

# Neighborhood 3- Requisition of Doom-2018



Cast: Soren Alf Correia (Ryan/Blake/Zombiekiller14), Breanna Renee (Joy/Kaitlyn), Lilly Dixon (Vicki/Madison), Anaela Hurt (Barbra/Makela), Addison Jenkins (Steve/Jared), Michael Jorge (Doug/Trevor), Sean Church (Tobias)  
Director: Janos Boon, Nicole Ehrhard, Nick Mendez, Andrew Wehnke, Megan Stacy  
Stage Manager: Kat Taylor

The Characters that I played in this production were Doug and Trevor. The best part about this was playing two characters that had such a big age difference.



# The Terrifying-2018

**Humanities Theater**  
2/28: 7:30PM  
3/1: 7:30PM  
3/2: 2:30 & 7:30PM

THE  
TERRIFYING

Persons with disabilities seeking accommodations in order to participate fully in this event should contact [theterrifyingteam@gmail.com](mailto:theterrifyingteam@gmail.com) in a timely fashion to allow making reasonable accommodations.

WRITTEN BY  
JULIA @RCHO

theterrifying2018.ticketleap.com



Cast from left to right: Mika Steel (Annaliese), Sean Church (Pewter), Michael Jorge (Vosha), Dalton Grant (Nickle) Andrada Angileri (Raluka), Soren Alf Corriea (Cloris), Bernard Scudder (Soldier)

Director: Janos Boon

Stage Manager: Kat Taylor

Scenic Designer: Alex Theisen

*The Terrifying*, Follows the story of towns people in a gothic European village that are being terrorized by a monster that eats people and takes people's desire.

The character that I played, Vosha, is a 13-year-old poor boy in the town struggling to get a grasp of reality when his best friend is murdered by the monster.

