

2022 LatinUs Theatre NEA Grant Submission

Mission of Your Organization:

The creation of a hispanic multicultural theater and arts center that will provide a work space that honors tradition while also allowing artists to express themselves, in addition to contributing to the progression of the culture of Ohio by involving the community in the development and conservation of arts and culture.

Summary of the background/history of your organization:

LatinUs Theater Company was founded in January 2018 by a group of diverse Latino/Hispanic community leaders with a passion for art and a common goal: to improve the visibility of Latino/Hispanic arts and culture in the Clark-Fulton neighborhood using rich Hispanic culture, language, and traditions in theater. Despite the large Latino/Hispanic population in Cleveland, the Hispanic community has been left out of economic, political and cultural arenas. LatinUs envisions a way to restore cultural consciousness and pride by representing cultural stories and traditions in an authentic and positive light, where no Latino/Hispanic characters will be stereotyped and misrepresented, and where the Spanish language will be cherished.

Since becoming a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in May 2018, we have secured grants from the Cleveland Foundation, George Gund Foundation, Ohio Arts Council, and more. We worked as a traveling company until 2020, when we were offered our own BlackBox theater in the new Pivot Center for Art, Dance, and Expression in the Clark-Fulton neighborhood, the first Latino/Hispanic BlackBox in the state of Ohio. We were forced to shut down our 2020 season and shifted all efforts towards giving life to our new Blackbox theater. All our staff and ensemble are required to be vaccinated against COVID-19. All shows are presented in Spanish with English supertitles.

Organization/Budget:

XXX

Programmatic Activities

Representative Examples Year 1- 2018

1. *The Big Heads (Los Cabezudos)* play has participated through Cleveland in multiple festivals, including Parade the Circle, FireFish Festival and Independence of Mexico Festival, as well as in Cleveland schools and libraries. The show included 6 actors and a director for every performance done in the summers of 2018 and 2019.
2. *The Cave of Salamanca (La Cueva de Salamanca)*, written by renowned Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes, was produced in partnership with Cleveland State University and Kent State University with performances in September and October of 2018.

Representative Examples Year 2- 2019

1. *Death and the Maiden (La Muerte y la Doncella)* by Ariel Dorfman (Argentine-Chilean-American playwright and human rights activist) was presented on March 1- April 14 of 2019 at Cleveland State University, Akron Theater and Ensemble Theater. The script explores the challenges of restoring democracy and stability to a country recovering from an oppressive military dictatorship. The audience was a combination of Spanish and non-Spanish speakers, totaling around 1000 individuals.
2. *The Unusual Case of Miss Piña Colada* by Carlos Ferrari, a fundamental figure of Puerto Rican theater, is a farcical play concerning a mother getting so caught up with her social status that she bankrupt her dysfunctional family. This production was presented with Cuyahoga Community College and Playhouse Square in September and October of 2019.

Representative Examples Year 3- 2020

1. *Divorcee, Vegetarian and Evangelist (Divorciadas, Vegetarianas y Evangélicas)* by Gustavo Ott is a comedy about life's challenges that can bring about the unlikeliest of friendships. Three women, each at a crossroads in their lives, face their demons and society's expectations with a little bit of irony. Shows were in February 2020 at Playhouse Square, with an audience of 600 people directly prior to the COVID-19 lockdown.
2. *Tales From My People* by Ulises Febles is a Cuban original script written for LatinUs Theater - CANCELED DUE TO COVID JUNE 2020
3. *Latino Christmas* by Puerto Rican native Monica Torres - CANCELED DUE TO COVID

Representative Examples- 2021

1. *La Casa de Bernarda Alba (The House of Bernarda Alba)* by Federico García Lorca. Directed by Cleveland-based visual artist John Rivera-Resto with a cast of more than 12

Latino actors, this adapted performance explored the complexity of Lorca's dark drama. Presented for 3 weekends in Spanish with English supertitles at the newly renovated LatinUs Blackbox Theatre in the Pivot Center for Art, Dance, and Expression.

2. *Baños Públicos, S.A. (Public Bathroom)* by Esther Suárez Durán is a two-person, Cuban comedy that tackles themes of Communism, entrepreneurship, and privilege in life's equal playing-field: the bathroom. Directed by Artistic Director Monica Torres, *Baños Públicos, S.A.* featured Sebastian Garcia-Torres—of Cuban descent—who resides in Lakewood, Ohio and Omar De La Cruz—of Venezuelan descent—who now calls Chagrin Falls home. Presented for 3 weekends in Spanish with English supertitles at the newly renovated LatinUs Blackbox Theatre in the Pivot Center for Art, Dance, and Expression.

Project Summary

LatinUs Theater presents *Trópico Macbeth* by John Rivera-Resto, a new, Spanish adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Macbeth* set in the fictitious Caribbean Republic of Santa Marina in 1934.

Project Description

LatinUs Theater strives to both celebrate and expand the boundaries of the Latino/Hispanic community in Cleveland. *Trópico Macbeth* does just that, taking the Elizabethan elements of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*—which are frequently inaccessible to Spanish-speaking theatre audiences—and fusing it with the language, culture, and history of the Spanish Caribbean. With this production, LatinUs will continue to be a beacon for Spanish-language theater in Ohio and can work towards creating a future humanity of a single culture.

The world of *Trópico Macbeth* is affected by true historical events from 1934. The socio-economic and political events in the Caribbean and worldwide will both give shape to events unfolding in the play and bring light to the world of that bygone era. This performance will be entirely in Spanish with English supertitles. Major topics woven into the adaptation include:

- The relationship and diplomacy between the U.S. and Latin America/the Caribbean
- The rise of European facism and its effect on Latin American dictators, leading to the rapid retreat of liberal democracy in Latin America/the Caribbean
- The impact of African influences on Caribbean folklore, beliefs, and practices
- The rise of mass media through film and radio, popularizing "Latin Music" and dance styles like the rumba and the mambo

Selection of Key Organizational Partners:

XXX

Selection of Key Individuals:

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Project Start Date: 1/1/2023

Project End Date: 12/31/2023

Schedule of Key Project Dates:

Tropico Macbeth :We will rehearse for 4 days/week x 3 months starting on July 11, 2022 for 3 months. Rehearsal duration is 3 hrs per day with 15 minutes break. Shows dates will be September 16-October 16, 2022 . Place-LatinUs Blackbox Theater. Set and costume and production will start on)1/02/2023.

Performance Measurement and Program Evaluation:

We will define success by:

1. Reaching a culturally mixed audience
2. Teaching about Latino culture, traditions and language
3. Simultaneously entertaining and educating audiences

Through the use of our Facebook page, we can engage the audience and have them share their critiques, thoughts, likes and dislikes regarding our theatrical production. We will also encourage attendees to fill out an evaluation after the event through paper or Survey Monkey. Through statistically significant questions, this survey will provide us with feedback that will allow us to cater our presentations to the community we serve.

Intended Audience/Participants/Community and Marketing:

Our intended principal audience is the Clark-Fulton neighborhood, located on the west side of Cleveland. According to the 2020 US Census, 47 percent of this neighborhood population is categorized as being of Latino or Hispanic descent, mostly Puerto Ricans whose first language is Spanish. We firmly believe that helping the community through arts and culture will improve the dignity of a neighborhood that has been impoverished and declining through the decades. Our goal is to foster our rich culture and introduce those who may not be familiar to an upbeat and entertaining program rooted in what it means to be Hispanic. Members of the community are always invited to participate and take part in all aspects of play productions. We will continue our partnership with the different Hispanic organizations in the area, like Esperanza and Young Latino Network, to reach our Latino audience.

LatinUs Theater company efforts will be through our public Facebook page and our internal email database. Using Facebook, we will reach the greater Cleveland area community, both Hispanic and non Hispanic.

We will be ad boosting for at least two months prior to the opening night performance. We will send publicity emails using Mailchimp to our email database of approximately 2000 people. We also want to engage the non-spanish speakers in our audience, marketing in a way that makes them fall in love with Spanish and cultivating an interest in learning the language, offering English supertitles at all performances. It is our tradition and moral obligation at LatinUs to offer 1 show per production free to our community, giving tickets for distribution to different hispanic organizations in the area, like Esperanza Inc whose mission is to improve the academic achievements of the Latino/Hispanic community in Cleveland.

Project Budget:

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