

Play Guide



GUADALUPE IN THE GUEST ROOM

Feb 22 – Mar 17, 2019

By Tony Meneses

Directed by Christie Vela

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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01.	THE PLAYWRIGHT	
	BIOGRAPHY	4
	<i>FINDING COMMON GROUND:</i> A CONVERSATION WITH PLAYWRIGHT TONY MENESES	5
02.	THE PLAY	
	SPEAKING THE SAME LANGUAGE	6
	LANGUAGE IN AMERICA	8
	THE POWER OF THE TELENODELA	9
03.	OUR PRODUCTION	
	MEET THE CAST	11
	GET TO KNOW GUADALUPE	12
	GET TO KNOW STEVE	14
	DESIGNING <i>GUADALUPE</i>	15
	<i>PAYING IT FORWARD:</i> ABERG CENTER FOR LITERACY	17
04.	ADDITIONAL UNDERSTANDING	
	OTHER WORK BY TONY MENESES	18
	WE RECOMMEND	19



The **Playwright**

Tony Meneses was born in Guadalajara, Mexico, and raised in Albuquerque and Dallas.

His plays include *Guadalupe in the Guest Room* and *The Women of Padilla*, which both had world premieres at Two River Theater. He's an alum of the Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab, Ars Nova Play Group, the Sundance Institute Playwrights Retreat at Ucross, Playwrights Realm Writing Fellowship, Youngblood, and has been previously developed at the LARK Playwrights' Week and the Berkeley Rep Ground Floor.

He's a two-time recipient of the Kennedy Center Latinx Playwriting Award, is published by Dramatists Play Service, and is currently under commission from the Denver Center, Two River Theater, and ShadowCatcher Entertainment.

MFA: Iowa Playwrights Workshop.

BA: The University of Texas at Austin.

He is currently in the Lila Acheson Wallace Playwrights Program at the Juilliard School.

Finding Common Ground

A Conversation with Playwright,
TONY MENESES

KELSEY LEIGH ERVI:

What inspired you to write this play?

TONY MENESES:

Growing up in an immigrant family, I often played the translator between my parents and the rest of the English-speaking world (parent/teacher meetings, customer service interactions, etc); in my child and then adolescent brain, I didn't understand why I had to do this (I was also a shy kid so these moments were pretty much always mortifying), but the older I got (and less self-centered), I began to wonder what it felt like for *them*. What was it like to be voiceless in the world around you? What was it like for *other* immigrants who struggled with their own language barriers? I imagine, pretty damn lonely, actually. And thus this play was born. I wanted to capture the experience of a woman who literally doesn't have the words to express herself, and more devastatingly the pain she's in after losing the thing she loves most in this world. I also wanted the audience to both feel her not having a voice and then also hear her fluently at times, so I sought to discover and dramatize both experiences, to fully see all sides of her and hopefully empathize.

KLE: *Have you always had a love of telenovelas?*

TM: Oh yeah. I don't much watch them now, but I used to watch all of the ones from the 90's (*Corazón Salvaje* was especially my favorite!) It was a nightly ritual I used to join in with my mom.

KLE: *Why is it important to produce this play right now?*

TM: To be honest, there is such antagonism against Mexican immigrants and immigrants in general right now, that if this play can help anyone in the audience see one of these people as more human, and as someone worth caring about and rooting for, then that feels like a triumphant act of love in a moment where we're all being driven apart by politics and the internet. Can we spend time with a woman like Guadalupe and see ourselves in her? My hope is that the answer is yes, and if that can happen in a theater, then maybe it can happen in real life too.

KLE: *You got your start in theatre in Dallas, how does it feel to have your work produced here?*

TM: Dallas is where my theatre life began, doing plays back in high school at W.T. White, and it feels so special to give something back to the place that helped me find my voice and career. I would not be where I am now without Dallas, TX, and it's beyond moving to come back home and share this play with the community that's still in my heart.

KLE: *What do you hope audiences will walk away with after seeing your play?*

TM: For me the goal in watching plays is empathy. We get to see and live the experiences of others, and hopefully gain a fuller understanding of other humans, but then also of ourselves. What connects us, and how do we cultivate and celebrate that? I hope this play can help the audience spend time with this question during the play and after. If Guadalupe and Steve can find common ground and yes, even love, then hopefully we can with the people we think couldn't be farther apart from us.

Speaking the Same Language

*Throughout **Guadalupe in the Guest Room**, playwright Tony Meneses utilizes a conceit in order to convey the language barrier that exists between the English-speaking characters and the Spanish-speaking characters.*

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN BY LANGUAGE

GUADALUPE:

Fluent in Spanish, understands/speaks/reads very little English

STEVE:

Fluent in English, understands/speaks/reads very little Spanish

RAQUEL:

Fluent in English, has an advanced understanding of Spanish and can read and write in Spanish

ROBERTO:

Fluent in Spanish, understands/speaks some English

Here are two examples of how this conceit is used in the play:

Example One

RAQUEL

Should we stop?

GUADALUPE

Oh no, I wouldn't dream of it.

RAQUEL

You sure?

GUADALUPE

(She nods.)

Where are we at right now?

Steve enters, stops, looks at them both.

STEVE

So-ee, ih meh oo introopuh.

(Sorry, didn't mean to interrupt.)

RAQUEL

Oh oor feh.

(Oh, you're fine.)

STEVE

Jih go-eh teh meh eh sandwich.

(Just going to make a sandwich.)

In this example, the English dialogue between Raquel and Guadalupe is actually meant to convey a conversation in Spanish between the two characters. When Steve enters and begins communicating with Raquel, a form of gibberish is used to convey that Steve and Raquel are now speaking in English, which Guadalupe (a primarily Spanish-speaker) does not understand.

Example Two

ROBERTO

Sorry. You help please?

GUADALUPE

Who you?

ROBERTO

Who? Oh, eh, gardner.

GUADALUPE

Who?

ROBERTO

I gardener, for house.

She notices the front of his pants all wet.

ROBERTO

Oh is eh not what you think. You give help?

GUADALUPE

I'm sorry I no under-stand.

ROBERTO

What you say?

GUADALUPE

Eh?

ROBERTO

Eh?

They're lost.

GUADALUPE

¡Válgame Dios!

ROBERTO

No mas faltaba.

They look at one another.

ROBERTO

¿Habras-

GUADALUPE

Español?

Everything changes now. They talk.

GUADALUPE

How may I help you?

ROBERTO

Yes, I was trying to say earlier. My name is Roberto, I'm the gardener.

In this example, Guadalupe and Roberto use an accent to convey an attempt to speak in English. They then use Spanish to acknowledge that they both speak Spanish fluently and therefore can communicate most effectively through that language. Although the scene continues in English, this is another example of English being used to convey a conversation in Spanish between two Spanish-speaking characters.

Throughout the play, there are three main conceits used by the playwright:

- Gibberish dialogue meant to convey a conversation between two English-speaking characters; these exchanges are meant to be heard from the perspective of the Spanish-speaking character that is also in the scene.
- English dialogue meant to convey a conversation between two Spanish-speaking characters OR between two English-speaking characters; this depends on who is in the scene.
- A Spanish accent used with English dialogue meant to convey an attempt to speak in English by a non-English-speaking character.



Language in America

Courtesy of
WORLDATLAS.COM

Although the country has no official language, English is the most commonly spoken language within the United States, and the explanation for this is very simple. America, before gaining its independence, was a British colony. The country therefore inherited much of its culture as well as language from the British.

Still, other languages are gaining traction as being frequently used within America's borders. Following English, the most spoken languages in the United States are Spanish, Chinese, French, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

A Country of Immigrants

Immigration has largely influenced the demographic patterns of the United States. The predominant majority of US immigrants hail from neighboring Mexico and other Latin American countries. A large influx of Hispanic people has made Spanish the second most widely spoken language within the country, and the number is ever growing as Spanish-speaking influences are unlikely to lose ground anytime soon. In California and Texas, the Spanish language is spoken and understood to some degree by over 20% of the population.

The Absence of Native American Languages

Without question, the United States is highly multicultural as a country, due to having drawn so many people from all parts of the world to live and work within its shores.

But one cannot forget about the many Native American languages spoken by the original inhabitants of this area. Many Native American tribes are emphasizing that their children learn their original languages, lest they should be lost after centuries of persecution and imposed assimilation. This being said, it is worth noting that no Native American language actually makes it to the list of the top 25 spoken within the United States. The Navajo language, which is the most widely spoken Native American language in the US today, has only roughly 170 thousand speakers. The state of the preservation and growth of Native American languages is still a major issue within the US.

Language by Numbers (Top 5 Languages in America)

<i>English</i>	<i>French</i>
231,122,908	2,047,467
<i>Spanish</i>	<i>Tagalog</i>
37,458,470	1,613,346
<i>Chinese</i>	
2,896,766	

The Power of the Telenovela

Courtesy of
PBS NEWS

Romance. Drama. That's what drives telenovelas, Latin American soap operas, one of the most popular forms of entertainment in the world, with hundreds of millions of viewers worldwide.

Telenovelas — literally television novels — have some things in common with their American cousins, the daytime soap operas. Telenovelas have their roots in Latin America, starting as graphic novel representations of classic literature and stories, later evolving into radio programs.

When soap companies started radio dramas to sell cleaning products to housewives in the 1930s, they established programs in Cuba as well. But when American companies could no longer sponsor programs in Cuba, there was a diaspora of talented Cuban actors, writers and producers that scattered through Latin America and began melding the American product with Latin American storytelling. But unlike U.S. soap operas, which ran for

decades, telenovelas have a contained story arc, ending after a few seasons. This makes them highly marketable and exportable, says Diana Rios, associate professor of communication sciences at University of Connecticut. They air every day, making them highly profitable to advertisers.

Some are aired only in the country they are produced, but others such as “Yo Soy Betty, La Fea” (“Ugly Betty”) are redone and adapted for dozens of other countries.

There are some common running themes in telenovelas — love lost, mothers and daughters fighting, long-lost relatives, love found. Telenovela audiences, however, like their stories with all the loose ends wrapped up and a happy ending — a big wedding finale is common. “Things have to be cleaned up so the audience has satisfaction. They won't worry about Maria — did she find true love, her true mother or her true father,” Rios said.

But for those few seasons, these telenovelas have the attention of millions of viewers, said Dr. Michael Rodriguez, a UCLA primary care physician who works with the Latino community, making them a good vehicle for educational messages. And unlike U.S. soaps, which are marketed to women, telenovelas are family programs. “More than half of [Latinos] are watching them,” Rodriguez said, “I remember myself watching them with my mother. In fact, I still do watch them when my mom is visiting.”

They are a cultural touchstone, especially for Spanish speakers across the globe. Popular story arcs like long-lost family members resonate with Latinos whose families may have emigrated. Religious references will appear in several of these series, another touchstone to

the predominantly Catholic Latino population.

For Latinos, watching telenovelas is often a way to keep in touch with their friends and family, especially those who have emigrated.

"It's a conversation piece," said Rios, "Latinos in the U.S. can talk about shows with people back in Latin America. ... I've had conversations with friends and they'll say, 'Oh, look at that. One of my relatives had something like that happen to her.'"

And while long-running soap operas such as *Guiding Light* and *One Life to Live* in the United States are being canceled, telenovela viewership in the United States is booming with 5.6 million people tuning in across the country versus 2.9 million soap opera viewers, according to Nielsen data.

And in the coming decades analyzing and studying the impact of telenovelas will be even more relevant as the United States' Latino population continues to grow, said Rios.

"[Telenovelas] are here to stay, and there's just going to be more of them," she said. "But they do have an impact and they are important to the Latino community."

Telenovelas by the Numbers

\$10 Million Budget



"La Reina," a telenovela launched in 2011 by Telemundo, had a record \$10 million budget, according to the *Hollywood Reporter*. It costs an estimated \$50 million to produce U.S. soap operas annually, according to the *LA Times*.

18 Countries



Colombian telenovela "Yo Soy Betty, La Fea" has been adapted for series in 17 other countries: India, Turkey, Germany, Mexico, Netherlands, Spain, Greece, Belgium, Serbia, Czech Republic, Vietnam, Philippines, China, Poland, Brazil, Georgia and the United States as "Ugly Betty."

5.7 Million Viewers

Season-to-date, telenovelas in the United States averaged 5.7 million viewers a week, according to Nielsen data.

2.9 Million Viewers

BY COMPARISON:

Season-to-date, soap operas on the U.S. broadcast networks (ABC, CBS and NBC) averaged a combined 2.9 million viewers, according to Nielsen.

Meet the CAST



LETICIA MAGAÑA
GUADALUPE



ANDREWS W. COPE
STEVE



GABRIELLE REYES
RAQUEL
CLAUDIA
AURELIA



DAVID LUGO
ROBERTO
JOSE FERNANDO
BERNARDO



PHOTO: EVAN MICHAEL WOODS

Get to Know Guadalupe

AN INTERVIEW WITH **Leticia Magaña**



Tell us a little bit about how you got your start in theatre.

I did a little bit of theatre in high school, but not in college. Then professionally – believe it or not – I started by sweeping the floors of the theater space for Teatro Dallas about 30 years ago. I eventually got the courage to audition for them and they started casting me in small plays. As my confidence grew, I worked with other companies including Dallas Children's Theater, Echo Theatre, Circle Theatre, and Dallas Theater Center.

How did you prepare for your role as Guadalupe?

I'm still preparing! And probably will continue to find something new about her until the very last show. Obviously, I began with the wonderful script that Tony Meneses has written and I looked for clues about who she is, what she was like before the play even starts, what relationships she has with the other characters, what she wants from them, and what drives her to say those specific words. I ask a lot of questions and if the answers aren't in the script, I imagine what would or could be true for Guadalupe and make that part of her life.

Why is important to produce this play now?

Because in our country right now there is a divided conversation about putting up a wall to keep immigrants out.

Two of the characters in this play are from Mexico and we get to see them as human beings, as people who grieve, love, and try to get along with those who are very different from them.

They can even impart some wisdom if we're willing to listen. That's part of what this play is asking of its audience: to open yourself up to someone who's completely different than you are and see if you can get a glimpse of a shared humanity so that the walls of fear between us can fall away; so that we view each other as worthy of being fellow humans on this planet.

Do you have a favorite TV show?

I don't have one favorite show, but some of the shows I've enjoyed are *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, *The Kominsky Method*, *The Crown*, *Lost in Space* (the new one – it's amazing!) And I get my news from *The Late Show with Steven Colbert*.

What's one thing you hope audiences will walk away with?

“I REALLY HOPE THAT THIS PLAY WILL BE MUCH MORE THAN JUST A LOVELY, HEARTWARMING STORY AND GOOD ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE EVENING.”

I hope that it will make a difference in the life of even just one person towards healing something in them or bringing some softness to a difficult relationship. This is my hope for all the projects I work on: that they are meaningful, which this one is, and that they have a measurable impact on people's lives.

Meet the Creative Team

DIRECTOR

Christie Vela

SCENIC DESIGNER

Bob Lavallee

COSTUME DESIGNER

Korey Kent

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Aaron Johansen

SOUND DESIGNER

John M. Flores

PROPERTIES DESIGNER

Matthew Duvall

FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER

Nicole Berastequi

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Whitney Holotik

STAGE MANAGER

Caron Grant

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Jessica Updike

Get to Know Steve

AN INTERVIEW WITH
Andrews W. Cope

PHOTO: EVAN MICHAEL WOODS



Tell us a little bit about how you got your start in theatre.

I did theatre all through high school and LOVED it. However, I did the "responsible" thing and achieved my Economics Degree at University of Oklahoma. I would find opportunities to scratch my performance itch through various campus-wide events, and eventually taking Acting for Camera with Daryl Cox my final semester. A couple of months before graduating and heading to law school, I had a private conversation with Daryl about acting and he said, "You know, you could make a living doing this." That was all I needed to hear. I forgot about law school, graduated, moved home to McKinney, TX, and enrolled in every acting class I could find. I worked my way through the community theatre circuit and finally found myself onstage at Contemporary Theater of Dallas for my first professional acting job – all in just over a year. That was 13 years ago. I have since sworn off acting many times.

Audiences might remember you from The Adventures of Tom Sawyer in 2014. What's it like being back at WaterTower?

CRAZY – for two reasons:

One, I am now a very proud husband and father. This is my first show in three years and I'm shaking off the rust that's accumulated on my acting instrument. And I'm doing that while learning how to use my time and energy to be the best Daddy I can be, the best husband I can be, the best employee at my day job I can be, and the best member of this production I can be.

Two, this place stirs up incredibly vivid memories for me of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. It was a VERY different play at a VERY different time in my life. There are many incredible parallels between that play and that time in my life and this play and this time in my life. It was perhaps my favorite role ever and favorite theatre experience ever. It wouldn't have been that way if it had been produced at another theater.

Why is important to produce this play now?

Plays like *Guadalupe in the Guest Room* are important to do at any time.

Two people in a terrible situation who have two things in common: they lost the most important person in their life, and they have no way to properly voice their needs to each other so that they can move on. Yet, they keep at it and have enough respect, sympathy, and empathy to find the patience needed to make those meaningful connections. And

that is the message that I think resonates especially loud right now: having the courtesy, the empathy, the respect to take the time to make those connections and understand each other.

What's your favorite TV show?

Of all time? Probably *The West Wing*.
Currently? *Ozark*. I have no clue how they're going to do a third season. Everyone in the show and everyone that watches the show are going to die of an anxiety attack.

What's one thing you hope audiences will walk away with?

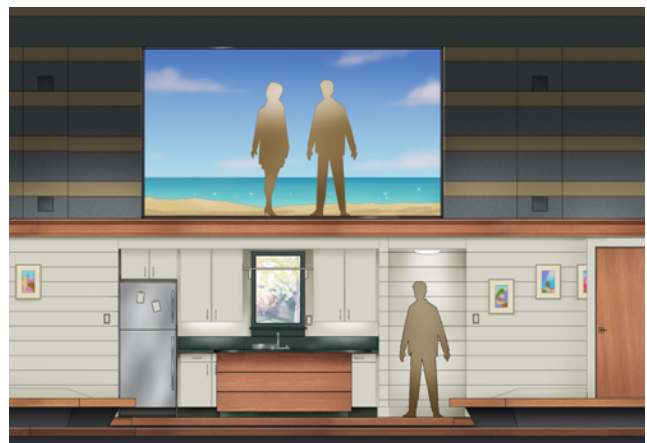
We are ALL broken people looking to connect. All we long for is to connect with someone in some meaningful way and to alleviate that brokenness – either ours or another's.

“IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TAKING THE TIME TO FIND THAT COMMON LANGUAGE.”

Designing Guadalupe

Costume design by
KOREY KENT





Paying It Forward

Information and photos courtesy of
ABERG CENTER FOR LITERACY

GUADALUPE IN THE GUEST ROOM

"PAY IT FORWARD WITH PAY WHAT YOU

CAN" BENEFICIARY:

ABERG CENTER *for* LITERACY

MISSION

Aberg Center for Literacy is building richer lives, stronger families and better communities through programs in English fluency, preparation for high school equivalency in English and Spanish, early childhood education, and family literacy.

THE NEED

The Demand for Adult and Family Literacy Services in Dallas County is Overwhelming.

Among Dallas County adults, nearly 25% do not speak English fluently, and 21% are illiterate. The future is bleak for this large percentage of the population with a high likelihood of poverty, hunger, incarceration, homelessness and lower life expectancy. Children inherit these problems from their parents, and the cycle of poverty continues. More than 60% of children entering Kindergarten in DISD need remediation. Children from low-income families enter Kindergarten 12-14 months behind their higher-income peers.

OUR SOLUTION

A Multi-generational Approach to Literacy is Needed for Families to Thrive!

Children mimic their parents from birth, developing from imitated facial gestures into adopted behaviors and mindsets. For children who grow up in low-income families, this common interaction may be detrimental to their future success. Research has documented the impact of a parent's education, economic stability, and overall health, on a child's trajectory. At Aberg Center for Literacy, we believe working with parents and children as a unit, and both generations simultaneously, is key to breaking the cycle of poverty.



Other Work by Tony Meneses

twenty50

The Hombres

Between Here and the City of Mexico

The Women of Padilla

LEARN MORE ABOUT
TONY'S WORK AT
www.newplayexchange.org

We Recommend



1. *Yo Soy Betty La Fea.*

There have been dozens of remakes and adapted versions of this novela, including the super popular American version, *Ugly Betty*, but the original — about a homely but brilliant secretary working at a high-pressure fashion company — was Colombian and ran from 1998–2001.



2. *Marimar.*

Forbidden love, disapproving parents and grandparents, beautiful beaches, hot guys, and Thalía as the protagonist Marimar (she falls in love with Sergio, the son of a wealthy farmer, much to the chagrin of his parents) — this Mexican novella had it all.



3. *La Reina del Sur.*

Translated as “The Queen of the South,” *La Reina* takes place in Mexico and chronicles the rise of Teresa Mendoza, who works her way up to become the most powerful drug lord in the country.



4. *Corazón Salvaje.*

A thrilling adaptation about the legendary love triangle between two young countesses, Monica and Aimée with the illegitimate son of a wealthy landowner, Juan del Diablo.



5. *El Internado.*

At first glance, *El Internado* Laguna Negra (the Black Lagoon Boarding School) lives up to its name as a fancy boarding school located in the middle of a dark, creepy forest. But when the school’s professors start disappearing, a group of students take it upon themselves to solve the mystery — and uncover some pretty dark secrets in the school’s past along the way.



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