

## LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES PROJECTS FOR 2023 LATINX NEW PLAY FESTIVAL

**Festival To Run October 27 – 29, Produced By Dr. Maria Patrice Amon,  
Playhouse’s 2023/2024 Artist-In-Residence**

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse is pleased to announce projects for the sixth **Latinx New Play Festival** taking place **October 27 – 29, 2023**, produced by **Dr. Maria Patrice Amon**, the Playhouse’s 2023/2024 **Artist-in-Residence**. The plays will include ***Apple Bottom***, by **Karina Billini**, directed by **Amelia Acosta Powell**; ***The Invocation of Selena***, by **Jessi Realz** and **Marilet Martinez**, directed by **Cambria Herrera**; ***The Jersey Devil Is a Papi Chulo***, by **Iraisa Ann Reilly**, directed by **Dr. Maria Patrice Amon**, the Playhouse’s 2023/24 Artist-in-Residence, and ***Manning***, by **Benjamin Benne**, directed by **Cat Rodríguez**.

The Latinx New Play Festival is a celebration of new theatrical work by Latinx playwrights from across the country. Originally launched in 2016 at San Diego Repertory Theatre, the festival expands the presence of Latinx stories and artists on the American stage and spotlights the broad range of today’s Latinx experience. More than 90 play submissions were received for this year’s festival, from which these four scripts were selected to be rehearsed and developed at the Playhouse, culminating in a live public reading at the festival in October.

The Latinx New Play Festival is free to attend and will include a robust schedule of in-person readings, panel discussions and other events. For more information, visit [LaJollaPlayhouse.org](https://LaJollaPlayhouse.org).

“We have a terrific lineup of new plays to share that respond to our current moment with both heart and joy. In the festival we have the opportunity to develop these new works, collaborating with artists from across the country to bring their scripts to life,” said **Amon**. “We are thrilled to have found a new partner for the Latinx New Play Festival in the La Jolla Playhouse, and we are excited for the work we can develop together.”

**La Jolla Playhouse** is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what’s new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer, the Playhouse is currently led by Tony Award winner Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, and Managing Director Debby Buchholz. The Playhouse is internationally renowned for the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 110 world premieres, commissioning 70 new works, and sending 33 productions to Broadway, garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

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***Apple Bottom***

By Karina Billini

Directed by Amelia Acosta Powell

The plastic surgery procedure, Brazilian Butt Lifts, are sweeping the wallets of the women in Miami and the staff at the post-BBL recovery house, Apple Bottom Spa, hopes to ride on this wave. When a humble childhood neighbor, Andrea, and a high-strung black-fishing social media influencer, Belinda, arrives as new patients, Apple Bottom Spa struggle to keep both women and the house afloat.

***The Invocation of Selena***

By Jessi Realz and Marilet Martinez

Directed by Cambria Herrera

*The Invocation of Selena* (TIOS) is a sketch comedy and cabaret-style show that explores how cultural icon Selena Quintanilla Pérez continues to inspire and motivate Latine people, particularly women and the LGBTQIA community. Through character monologues, drag, choreographed dance numbers, audience participation, moments of song, and more, the play celebrates cultural duality while examining when, why, and how we call on Santa Selena in our everyday lives.

***Manning***

By Benjamin Benne

Directed by Cat Rodriguez

After the death of his mother, Freddy and his father, Julio, spread her ashes in the garden, and a giant zucchini (that seems to have a heartbeat) sprouts overnight. Freddy calls his older brother Sebastian home to witness the vegetable, and also help take care of their father Julio, who seems to have lost the will to live. Sebastian brings his recently bonded red tailed hawk along and the two brothers try their best to coax their father out of his room. Can all three men develop a communal vocabulary to express their grief with each other?

***The Jersey Devil Is A Papi Chulo***

By Iraisia Ann Reilly

Directed by Dr. Maria Patrice Amon

*The Jersey Devil Is A Papi Chulo* is a comedic, bilingual, post-quarantine play. Five American-Latina friends embark on a camping trip in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey for the bachelorette party that should have been. There they encounter two white “papi chulos” (‘hotties’) who are doing this camping thing right: with running water. The boys hatch a plan inspired by reality television in order to determine which of the femme-fatales they will save from deportation through marriage. But will the boys be able to save the women from The Jersey Devil?

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## Artist Biographies

**Dr. Maria Patrice Amon** is a director, producer, scholar and leader. Directing credits include: *Hoops* (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre), *A Sceptic and a Bruja* (Urbanite Theatre), *Group! The Musical* (Passage Theatre), *Hoopla!* (La Jolla Playhouse POP Tour), *Azul* (Diversionary Theatre), *Mojada* (UC San Diego), *A Zoom of One's Own* (CSUSM), *Ich Bin Ein Berliner* (Theatre Lab), *DREAM HOUSE* (CSUSM/TuYo Theatre), *Fade* (Moxie Theatre), *The Madres* (Moxie Theatre), *Lydia* (Brown Bag Theatre Company). Dramaturg: *Manifest Destinitis* and *Beachtown* (San Diego Rep). Patrice was a 2020 National Directing Fellow and an Associate Artistic Director at San Diego Repertory Theatre. She is also a co-founder and co-Artistic Director of TuYo Theatre, a professional Latinx Theatre Company in San Diego, with whom the Playhouse collaborated for *On Her Shoulders We Stand* at the 2022 Without Walls (WOW) Festival. Currently an LTC Steering Committee member and a board member for NNPN, Patrice is an assistant professor at CSUSM. JD: California Western School of Law. Ph.D.: UC Irvine. [mariapatriceamon.com](http://mariapatriceamon.com)

**Benjamin Benne's** (he/him) plays include *Alma* (world premiere '22: CTG's Kirk Douglas Theatre in L.A. & American Blues Theater in Chicago; ArtsWest in Seattle '22; Curious Theatre in Denver '23; Central Square in Cambridge '23), *In His Hands* (World Premiere '22: Mosaic Theater of DC), and *What/Washed Ashore/Astray* (world premiere '23: Pillsbury House in Minneapolis). His play MANNING is scheduled to have its World Premiere at Portland Stage in 2024. He has been the recipient of Portland Stage's Cluder Competition Grand Prize, Arizona Theatre Company's National Latinx Playwriting Award, the Kennedy Center's KCACTF Latinx Playwriting Award, American Blues' Blue Ink Playwriting Award, and the Playwrights' Center's McKnight and Many Voices Fellowships, among others. The L.A. Times named him part of "LA Vanguardia: The Latino innovators, investigators, and power players breaking through barriers." He has been commissioned by South Coast Rep and Seattle Rep. MFA: Playwriting, David Geffen/Yale School of Drama '22. [benjaminbenne.com](http://benjaminbenne.com)

**Karina Billini** is a Dominican-American playwright, poet, and educator from Brooklyn. Karina completed her undergraduate degree in playwriting at Marymount Manhattan College (2011) and received her MFA in Playwriting from The New School for Drama (2018.) She is a proud alum of the New Harmony Project Conference, Ensemble Studio Theatre's Youngblood, Pipeline PlayLab, Gingold Theatrical Group's Speaker's Corner, among others. Her plays have been workshopped and/or produced at Alliance Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, New Harmony Project, Fault Line Theatre, Teatro Vivo, among others. *Apple Bottom* is a recipient of the Ensemble Studio Theatre/ Alfred P. Sloan Foundation commission. Her other plays include: *2144 South St* (Barrington Stage's Bonnie and Terry Berman's New Play Award Finalist), *Faded* (Williamstown/Alliance/Kendeda Finalist), *BECOMING LUCY* (EST/Teatro Vivo), and *All the Helium Hearts over Belt Parkway (Est.)*. She is a Lila Acheson Wallace American playwriting fellow at The Juilliard School.

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**Cambria Herrera** is a Xicanx theatre director and educator based in San Diego, California. All of their work rises from their core inspiration: queer and female artists of color from the past and present. They have a passion for using theatre to empower young people in building empathy for themselves and the world around them. At UC San Diego, they completed an MFA in directing and created The Stars Through the Smog Showcase for a collective of diverse undergraduate students to incubate original works on themes of identity and reclamation. They co-founded and facilitated The AGE Theatre Collective and mentorship program in Portland, Oregon to empower the resiliency of female and non-binary theatre artists of color. Recent credits include *900 Years* at UCSD's Wagner New Play Festival (Director), *Blu* at UCSD (Director), *(Un)Documents* at Diversionsary Theatre (Touring Production Director), *Fandango for Butterflies (And Coyotes)* at La Jolla Playhouse (Associate Director), *Fifty Boxes of Earth*, *In the Red and Brown Water* and a queer adaptation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare at UCSD, and a world-premiere adaptation of *King Arthur* at Long Beach Opera (Assistant Director).

**Jessi Realz and Marilet Martinez** are the artistic creative force known as Tus Tías Productions. Their show *The Invocation of Selena* was featured at the Latinx Theatre Commons Comedy Carnaval in 2022. They have been homegirls and collaborators since 2017 and are Co-Artistic Directors of the award winning, nationally renowned, Chicago-based Latine comedy collective *Ratas de Dos Patas* (RDDP). Together, Jessi and Marilet have created fan favorite programming like RDDP's annual Día de Los Muertos show, *Ratas Gigante*, and the first inception of *The Invocation of Selena*. With puro amor, Tus Tías conceive shows that celebrate and explore the joys and complexities of Latine cultura through a contemporary lens. Fueled by ancestral honoring and a belief that there is laughter in the revolution, Tus Tías are advocates for radical self-acceptance, visibility of marginalized stories, and busting the barriers of oppression with jajas. Con cafecito, palo santo, y chistes, Tus Tías will lift you up, party down, and have you living la buena vida! Quien los quiere? Tus Tías!

**Iraisa Ann Reilly** (She/Ella) is a writer, performer, and educator who is half-Cuban, half-Irish, and whole New Jersey. Select full-length plays include *Good Cuban Girls* (Teatro del Sol, at The Arden Theatre), *The Jersey Devil is a Papi Chulo* (Sol Fest 2022, Yale Drama Series Shortlist 2022, Finalist Leah Ryan Prize, KCACTF) *Saturday Mourning Cartoons* (Winner, Bay Area Playwright's Festival 2022, Arkansas New Play Festival 2023, Finalist Goldberg Playwriting Prize 2022, Semifinalist Blue Ink Award 2023, Semifinalist Premiere Stages). Her work has been developed with Theatre Exile, The New Harmony Project, The Chain Theatre, The Workshop Theatre, ARTHouse INKubator, NYU Production Lab's Development Studio and the Latinx Playwright's Circle. Her play *House Bill 3979: Amendment #10: The Life and Works of Dr. Hector P. Garcia* was commissioned and produced by Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in 2022. Iraisa Ann is currently under commission with the Arden Theatre Company in Philadelphia and Michigan State University. She is a recipient of the 2023 Latinx Playwright's Circle Mentorship, working with mentor Migdalia Cruz. Her screenplay *La Reina del Bronx* won best screenplay at Fusion Film Festival and was a semifinalist for the Vail Screenwriting Competition. As a performer, Iraisa Ann recently appeared off-Broadway in Arlene Hutton's *According to the Chorus*. She's taught students of all ages and is an adjunct professor of Dramatic Writing at NYU Tisch. MFA in Dramatic Writing from NYU, B.A. in Theatre and English from the University of Notre Dame. [iraisaannreilly.com](http://iraisaannreilly.com).

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**Cat Rodríguez** (she/ella) weqs in theater + new media, serving collaboration, community, and lqqks. Cat wears many wigs: she acts, directs, and dramaturgs. A co-foundress of the queer collective Fake Friends, Cat recently performed in the company's co-created Off-Broadway production of *Circle Jerk*, for which she and her colleagues received Obie Awards (2022) and that was a Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2021. A "people person" with a politic and a love for the Ridiculous, she's all about bringing discernment, critical rigor, playfulness, specificity, and laughter to process. Black / Latinx feminisms as well as collectivist organizing experiences fundamentally inform her artmaking and pathtaking. Cat lives and labors in english y español, talks with her hands, and also anda con ganas. Formally trained at Yale School of Drama and Carnegie Mellon (where she's taught, too), Cat stays undomesticated and un-disciplined; she's a feral force. A freelancing femme, Cat considers herself a nomad but always names New Orleans and Nicaragua home. Cat is currently a Sundance Institute Latine Fellow. 2022 CultureHub Resident Artist (Fake Friends). 2022 Mercury Store Resident Artist (Fake Friends). 2021-22 Art of Practice Fellow + Community Leader, Sundance Interdisciplinary Program. [catlikemeow.com](http://catlikemeow.com)

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