

Legal Name

Emerson College

Project Title

To support the Latino Theater Commons ongoing efforts to address a need for more production and presentation opportunities for new works for the stage by Latina/o artists

Project Progress and Successes

Encuentro 2014 brought over 100 Latina/o theatremakers to Los Angeles, and the 2014 Latina/o Theatre Commons (LTC) National Convening, supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation brought an additional 125 artists, scholars, administrators, and advocates to the Los Angeles Theatre Center (LATC) from November 6-10, 2014. This is a significant increase over the number of people who were able to physically participate in our 2013 Convening.

As part of the Convening at Encuentro 2014, participants attended ten full productions that ranged broadly in form, content, and geographic origin. They included:

Properties of Silence by Teresa Chavez, Rose Portillo, Alan Pulner - About Productions (Los Angeles, CA)

Zoetrope Part I by Javier Antonio Gonzalez - Caborca Theater (New York, NY)

Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary by Marissa Chibas - Duende CalArts (Los Angeles, CA)

Patience, Fortitude and Other Antidepressants by Mariana Carreño King - INTAR/Unit 52 (New York, NY)

Premeditation by Evelina Fernández - Latino Theater Company (Los Angeles, CA)

Enrique's Journey by Sonia Nazario, adapted by Anthony Garcia - Su Teatro (Denver, CO)

Agua a cucharadas (Water by the Spoonful) by Quiara Alegria Hudes - Tanta Teatro (San Juan, PR)

La Esquinita U.S.A. by Ruben Gonzalez - El Teatro Campesino (San Juan Bautista, CA)

Your Problem With Men by Emilio Williams - Teatro Luna - America's Pan Latina Theatre Company (Chicago, IL)

Dancing in My Cockroach Killers by Magdalena Gomez - Teatro Pregones (The Bronx, NY)

Each morning began with a full group reflection session on the shows participants viewed and "encountered" the day before. After these discussions on art and aesthetics, participants moved into a sessions led by Cornerstone Theatre Company (a reading of Alisal by Juliette Carrillo) one morning, and South Coast Repertory the next (a session on community engagement around José Cruz Gonzales' The Long Road Today). After a quick lunch, participants spent the afternoon and evening seeing shows, and attending optional panels and conversations, focused on a variety of topics from "Building Your Regional Alliance" to the history of the Encuentro 2014 host company, the Latino Theater Company. Every night was topped off with unique local musical performances and networking opportunities in the form of the LATC's "Late Night Lounge." On the final day of the Convening, participants attended the performance of the Encuentro 2014 artists' Co-created Work. During the month of Encuentro, the participating artists gathered to work on

the festival were split into groups to devise a piece of theatre together. These pieces were presented as one larger piece in a historic, one-time performance (which was livestreamed on HowlRound TV, and rebroadcast the next day at two special regional gatherings centered around Latina/o theater in the USA - one at the Martin E. Segel Theatre Center in New York, NY and one at Victory Gardens Theater in Chicago, IL). After the performance, the Conveners and Encuentro artists gathered together for one final family meal in the lobby of the LATC, allowing them to celebrate the work that had been created, the relationships that had been formed, and the art that had been shared.

Overall, the Convening was very successful, and that speaks to the very real need for another gathering of this magnitude after the 2013 Boston Convening. There are very few, relatively speaking, spaces in the USA for Latina/o identified artists (and their allies) to see Latina/o stories on stage, and even fewer times when artists of color are able to creatively and artistically reflect on the process through something other than the traditional lense of "diversity."

Immediately following the four days of Convening, the LTC Steering Committee stayed in Los Angeles for their first in-person meeting (of this iteration of the Steering Committee), held on Monday, November 10. The meeting was sponsored in part by Emerson College, and was held at Emerson's new Los Angeles campus. During this meeting, LTC Steering Committee members were able to reflect on the past year of work and programming and plan for the year to come and the LTC's next initiative--the LTC Carnaval of New Latina/o Work, hosted by The Theatre School at DePaul University in Chicago, IL and to be held in July 2015.

However, the real story here is not in the numbers of shows seen, or number of people present, but rather in the transformed hearts and minds of participants in Encuentro 2014. Since the festival and Convening ended, there has been an outpouring of gratitude to both the LTC and the LATC for creating a welcoming space for all to come together and talk about artmaking and aesthetics and Latina/o theatre today. Through producing this National Convening, and associate producing the Encuentro, the LTC learned the importance of carving out a space, not only for those who self-identify as Latina/o, but for anyone and everyone who believes in the New American Theatre--a theatre that practices radical inclusivity, and reflects the poly-cultural nation we live in.

Challenges / Obstacles / Failures Encountered in the Project

Creating a truly inclusive space was a huge goal for this convening, and while we were successful on many fronts, there was still room in our gathering for more inclusivity and openness. In the future, we would like to subsidize more travel and housing costs to this end. The allies at the Convening were a vital part of our conversation (we need to resist becoming an "echo chamber" as one LTC Steering Committee member has said), and we hope to broaden the circle even wider in the future.

Another challenge we faced was creating the artmaking conversations to the caliber we had initially envisioned. Each day we tweaked the design of the conversation based upon learning from the day before, but in some ways we never fully landed on a solid model. This was a lesson in itself on the difficulty artists in the American Theatre have talking about the work, both our own and each others.

Another learning moment from the Convening was that sometimes less is more. While we were eager to squeeze everything in we could, there were moments when some people may have felt "over-programmed."

What was learned from these that might be of benefit to others?

Remember to build in time to reflect during gatherings like this. Even though the impulse is to let it go, don't. It's just as important as the programming itself.

Talking about our art with one another honestly is not easy. As a field we struggle with this concept, and we all need to work on creating more consistent space for these conversations to happen.

It was absolutely imperative that the LTC work with a strong partner, and we had that with the Latino Theater Company and the Los Angeles Theatre Center. Beginning in mid-June 2014, the LATC opened its doors to the LTC, providing office space to the LTC Producer, allowing for constant contact, meetings, planning sessions, and transparency between the LATC and LTC. Encuentro 2014 and the 2014 National Convening were truly a group endeavor, and would have been impossible to execute without all hands on deck.

Links to relevant website(s) and/or project publications, reports, etc.

Link to all Encuentro & 2014 Convening content on Café Onda: <http://bit.ly/1A68gCP>

"Encuentro 2014 Manifiesto" by LATC Artistic Director José Luis Valenzuela (video of the opening ceremonies of the 2014 LTC National Convening):
<http://howlround.com/encuentro-2014-manifiesto>

LTC Webpage: <http://howlround.com/latina/o-theatre-commons>

LTC Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/471911836255863/?fref=ts>

If someone wishes to speak with your organization further about your project, would there be a willing contact? Y/N

If yes, please provide contact name and information for preferred method of contact (email, phone, etc).

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