– 15th Annual –

SHORT PLAY FESTIVAL



NATIVE VOICES Sunday, April 6, 2:00 p.m. Thursday, April 10, 7:00 p.m.

The Autry.org/Native Voices

For far too long, when most people thought of Native Americans, they often conjured up outdated images of exotic figures from history, adorned in leather and feathers, trapped behind museum glass. Few envisioned the beautifully vibrant cultures that thrive today. For our 15th Annual Short Play Festival, we asked Native playwrights to boldly go where few have imagined Native people before: the future!

What captivating tales
have they woven? Witness
a future filled with hope,
the delightfully absurd, and
the downright terrifying.
Perhaps we will laugh at our
future selves, recognize our
humanity, and even course
correct to create a better
future.

"I smell... HOPE. I haven't smelled that in... well, as long as I can recall."

- Montauk from Butterfly

FEATURING

The Twins and the Trickster

by **Ripley Barnes** (Choctaw, Osage, Kiowa)

In a world swallowed by water, twin siblings set out across the endless waves in search of food, clinging to the remnants of a lost civilization. But when they stumble upon an abandoned robot buried beneath the tides, their simple quest turns into a life-altering discovery.

The Last Indians

by Montana Cypress (Miccosukee Tribe)

With Mars stripped bare, humanity's survival now depends on a daring mission to Saturn's moon, Titan. A crew of explorers accompanied by a human hybrid designed for survival in alien environments prepare to take the first steps toward a new colony. But as they descend onto Titan's surface, tensions rise. Is this the key to humanity's future? Or a sign that they have gone too far?

Virtual Rez-ality

by Claire Soleil Gardner (Métis-Cree)

Drifting through the vast emptiness of space, a young pilot nears the end of their long voyage to a distant planet. With only the ship's AI for company, they escape into virtual reality, where their family keeps them tethered to home—the reservation they left behind on Earth. But when an asteroid belt threatens their journey, the pilot must rely on long-distance help.

The Gods of Europa

by Claude A. Jackson, Jr. (Gila River Indian Community)

Earth was abandoned long ago, left to those deemed unworthy of the stars. Now, the ruling class—secure in their colonies on Europa and Mars—seeks to reclaim their lost world. As co-workers Caleb and Shakota debate their duties, secrets unfold, leading to a dangerous game of deception with the fate of Earth hanging in the balance.

Epitaph For a Falcon Dancer

by **Bret Jones** (Muscogee Creek)

In orbit around Mars, a Puskataw Chief gathers her belongings, preparing for yet another forced relocation. She debates the fate of her people with an android built to serve but programmed to remember. Will history repeat itself—a new land, same old displacement?

Reparations ATM

by Maddox Pennington (Cherokee Nation)

When cousins Jean and Marina try out the new Reparations ATM, they expect a quick payout to ease their struggles. Instead, they get more than they bargained for—a gathering of disgruntled ancestors with unfinished business.

Butterfly

by Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel (Mohegan)

After the rising tides turn New England into New Island, star-crossed lovers Macky and Ket are destined for the brutal mining camps that keep the new order running. But when an ancient species emerges, only Ket can understand their message and hope flickers where none was left.

Powwow on a Hiding Moon

by **P.C. Verrone** (Osage, Kiowa)

In a not-so-distant future, two Osage teens board a space transpo bound for an impossible destination—a powwow on the Moon. But there's just one problem: the Moon disappeared years ago. Is it a scam? Or is it real? As the teens journey deeper into the unknown, they must confront what they believe, what they fear, and what it truly means to dance between past and future.

"That's not how Iko sees it. She says the Moon "left." Like the buffalo back in the day. The Moon realized she couldn't protect her people, that she needed to protect herself."

- Nyx from *Powwow on a Hiding Moon*



Ripley Barnes is a Southern California Native of African American, Choctaw, and Osage/Kiowa descent. She comes from a family of movie buffs; as her parents named her after the iconic Ellen Ripley from the *Alien* franchise. She enjoys creating fun, twisted worlds in familiar genres while centering diverse voices. When Ripley is not writing, she is probably trying new restaurants, drawing her original superhero comic, or crafting her next stand-up routine. She has worked on and developed projects with Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Netflix, and Walt Disney Studios. Ripley is currently a writer and co-creator of a story podcast series produced with QCODE.



Montana Cypress is a Los Angeles-based playwright, filmmaker, and actor. Originally from the Miccosukee Tribe located in South Florida, he has studied acting at the Stella Adler Conservatory in New York, New York Film Academy (Burbank), the UCLA Professional Program in Acting. Program. He is a two-time winner of the Von Marie Atchley Excellence in Playwriting Award, winner of Best Native American Directed Short at the Phoenix Film Festival, and was runner-up at the national AT&T SHAPE Create-a-thon contest held by Warner Brothers. His full-length comedic play, *A Christmas In Ochopee*, premiered

in Minneapolis at New Native theatre, and the feature film version premiered at the 2024 Phoenix Film Festival. He has had several short and feature films premiere internationally. His documentary about alligator wrestling can be viewed on PBS North's YouTube channel titled, *The Art of Gator Wrestling*. Montana continues to study all things related to theatre, cinema, and acting.



Claire Soleil Gardner is a multi-disciplinary playwright, director, dramaturg, and performer with a BFA in theatre arts from Boston University. She is a proud Indigenous (Métis-Plains Cree) queer individual whose passion for history, education, and social justice is central to their work. Based in Boston and NYC, Claire's recent work includes the New to the Neighborhood playwright residency commissioned by What Will the Neighbors Say? and The Kittie Knox Plays commissioned by Plays in Place.



Claude A. Jackson Jr. is a Gila River Indian Community playwright, screenwriter, and filmmaker. His play, Cashed Out, was produced at San Francisco Playhouse (2022/23), and Olivia will be part of Arizona State University's 2026/27 season. His film, The River (2024), has gained recognition at many film festivals, and his feature, In Circles (2015), remains on Amazon Prime. A frequent Native Voices contributor, Claude lives in Chandler, Arizona, with his wife, three children, and their dogs, Quavo and Coco.



Bret Jones is Muscogee (Creek) and a former professor in the School of Performing Arts at Wichita State University in Kansas. He is a novelist, filmmaker, and audio fiction producer. He has five published plays, produced several film and audio projects, authored two mystery novel series with Cozy Cat Press, and a short story published by the *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*. He lives in Goddard, Kansas, with his wife and children.



Maddox Pennington is Cherokee and enjoys working with Native Voices as both a playwright and an actor. Last November, he made his Native Voices on-stage debut in the World Premiere production of Beth Piatote's Antikoni. His play, Central Standard Time (the second play in The Muldrow Cycle), was developed in the Native Voices 2023 Playwrights Retreat. His work has also been read in the 2023 T/GNC Reading Festival, the Theater Viscera Podcast, Off-Off Broadway NYC's FRIGID Queerly Festival, the Moving Arts MADLab, the Native American Media

Alliance TV Writing Fellowship, and the inaugural Creative Nations First Storytellers Festival in Boulder, Colorado. Last year he directed *Marilyn Monroe in the Desert* with the Premiere the Play podcast. His award-winning work at the Hollywood Fringe Festival with majority nonbinary/trans casts has included *Love Chicken, Annex,* and *A Third Space*. Maddox has taught creative and college writing at Columbia University, American University, and the University of Southern California, where he is currently an assistant professor offering first-year and advanced writing courses in Native studies, queer studies, disability studies, and society and technology.



Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel is a member of the Mohegan Council of Elders. She was trained in Mohegan traditional knowledge by Medicine Woman Gladys Tantaquidgeon (1899–2005) and has served her tribal nation in the traditional roles of Medicine Woman and Tribal Historian. Her books include Medicine Trail: The Life and Lessons of Gladys Tantaquidgeon (University of Arizona Press), Wabanaki Blues (Poisoned Pen Press,), and Snowy Strangeways (Urban Farmhouse). Melissa was a finalist in the Eugene O'Neill National Playwright's

Conference for her stage play Flying Bird's Diary, and her screenplays have won over thirty awards at various film festivals. The audio play she co-wrote with Madeline Sayet, titled Up & Down the River (commissioned by Hartbeat Ensemble during the pandemic), is in post-production as a film for the National Parks Foundation with a screening this spring. Her screenplay, Forgotten Founder, is in post-production and being produced by Dartmouth College. She was also commissioned by Long Wharf Theatre to write short plays for their Stories of the Land series. Both Bad Tattoo and Don't Point had workshops last year.



P.C. Verrone is an Osage and Kiowa playwright who has developed work with AlterTheater, The Blank, Center Theater Group, EST/Sloan Project, La Jolla Playhouse, Native Voices, Primary Stages, and Urbanite Theatre. Crocodile Day, his Indigenous reimagining of Peter Pan, was published by Playscripts. His fellowships include: Many Voices Fellowship (Playwrights' Center), Generation Now Fellowship (Children's Theatre Company), Tin House Residency, and New Jersey Individual Artist Fellowship. His debut novel Rabbit, Fox, Tar is forthcoming from Catapult. He holds a BA from Harvard University and an MFA from Rutgers University-Newark.

"I'm part of the resistance, Wolfheart. I belong to a group—we're underground—Indigenous to all continents of the third rock, originals of the originals. We're all tribes."



COMPANY

Darrell Dennis is an actor, writer, director, producer, comedian, and a member of the Secwepemc Nation. His feature film, *The Great Salish Heist,* which he wrote, directed, and starred in, is currently streaming on Super Channel. His most recent feature film, *Sweet Summer Pow Wow,* is currently screening at film festivals across North America.



Audrey Lilyquist is an LA-based Oglala Lakota actor who graduated from Azusa Pacific University with a BFA in acting for the stage and screen. Their passion for acting and theatre have been growing ever since they hit the stage at 9 years old to play Mulan's Mother in Mulan Jr. Her love of storytelling has inpired her to bring more Indigenous stories and representation to the stage and screen. Audrey is thrilled to be making their Native Voices debut.



Nikcoma Lee Mahkewa is Hopi-Tewa, Mohave,
Chemehuevi and originally from the Colorado River
Indian Tribal reservation in Parker, Arizona. He is an LAbased actor, having most recently performed on stage
in the company of Rhiana Yazzie's *The Other Children of*the Sun at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing
Arts. He was previously seen as Tairasias in Beth Piatote's
Antikoni for Native Voices and toured in the understudy
company of The 1491's satirical play Between Two Knees at
McCarter Theatre and Seattle Rep.



Jen Olivares is an Acjachemen actor, director, choreographer, and commissioned playwright with Celebration theater in Los Angeles. Recent acting credits include Off-Broadway: The Pirate La Dee Da (Atlantic Theatre Company); Regional: Between Two Knees, Manahatta (Yale Repertory Theatre), Oklahoma!, The Way the Mountain Moved, Off the Rails (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); National Tour: Rock of Ages, Where We Belong, Ajijaak on Turtle Island (Dir.); TV: Bull (CBS), The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel (Amazon Prime). jenolivares.com

"Grandchildren, we will accept your offer of reparations, and as a gesture of thanks, we will bring you back t-shirts. Meet us on this spot, one year from now."

- Granny from Reparations ATM



Arigon Starr, an enrolled member of the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma, is a musician, actor, artist, and playwright who utilizes humor to dispel stereotypes about Native people. She has released four music CDs, three Super Indian graphic novels, and is a frequent contributor to Native Voices. She is also an in-demand illustrator (Kokila Books' award-winning Contenders) and lecturer. Arigon is based in Los Angeles.

arigonstarr.com and superindiancomics.com



Kholan Studi is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation. His select credits include Edward in *Bingo Hall* by Dillon Chitto, Anthony in *Where The Summit Meets The Stars* by Frank Kaash Katasse, Haemon in *Antikoni* by Beth Piatote (Native Voices), *Between Two Knees* by The 1491's as Pale Face/William (Yale Repertory Theatre), Isaiah/Eddie (Seattle Rep), and Ensemble (Perelman Performing Arts Center). Kholan recently played Actor Four in *The Other Children of the Sun* by Rhianna Yazzie (TYA at The Kennedy Center).



Thomas Winter is an actor and writer based in Los Angeles. He made his professional debut as Melchior Gabor in *Spring Awakening* at East West Players. Since then, he has performed several voice-acting roles, including the audio play *Zeni, Dean of the Diamond*. Thomas is developing a solo show with East West Players as part of their Solo Project program sponsored by Amy Hill. He is a graduate of the USC School of Dramatic Arts. IG: @ thomas winter



Jehnean Washington is Yuchi, Seminole and Shoshone descent, and a graduate of the American Musical and Dramatic Academy, NYC. She has worked for over thirty years as an actor, voice-over artist, singer-songwriter, and musician. Her original arrangements can be heard on the Grammy-nominated albums *Song of America* and *Sweetland*, and she is a featured singer on the NAMMY award-winning album *SIIB*. She performs with the world-famous, LA-based opera company, The Industry.



Becca Worthington is thrilled to be making her California debut! She is from Tulsa, Oklahoma, and is proudly Cherokee and Choctaw. Her favorite credits include Charity in Sweet Charity (Texas Tech), Sister Leo in Nunsense (Great Plains Theatre), and Actor 1 & 3 u/s in The Other Children of the Sun (The Kennedy Center). Find Becca in the upcoming film, The Book of Jobs. TTU BFA alum. Many thanks to her family and to Justine Hunt! becca-worthington.com



All actors are appearing through a special agreement between Native Voices and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

JUDGES

Lucas Brown Eyes (Oglala Sioux)

Tonantzin Carmelo (Tongva/Kumeyaay)

Rene Haynes

Cara Jade Myers (Kiowa/Witchita)

Aaron Yazzie (Navajo)



Elise Bear, a member of the lowa Tribe of Oklahoma and an Osage and Myskoke Creek descendant, is a freelance theatre artist based in Oklahoma City. They received a BA in theatre and performance from Oklahoma City University. Elise's recent credits include co-writer/actor in Channeling Our Ancestors (Tulsa Performing Arts Center), dramaturg for Macbeth (Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park), and assistant director/dramaturg for The Thanksgiving Play (OKC Repertory Theatre). They are currently performing in the world premiere of NOW, The Myskoke Project. Elise is honored to be working with Native Voices for the first time!



Jill Carter is an Anishinaabe-Ashkenazi researcher and theatre-worker who works in Tkaron:to with many Indigenous artists to support the development of new works and to disseminate artistic objectives, processes, and outcomes through community-driven research projects. A member of the Indigenous Dramaturgy Lab, she stories the land with First Story, Toronto, and facilitates Land-Based Creation workshops for urban theatremakers. In 2024, she received the Elliott Hayes Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dramaturgy from the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of America.



David Geary belongs to the Taranaki (Māori) iwi. He grew up loving Māui Trickster tales Aotearoa (New Zealand) and now lives with Coyote and Raven tricksters on Coast Salish lands in colonial Canada. He teaches in Capilano University's Indigenous Digital Film program and playwriting for Playwrights Theatre Centre. He is a dramaturg and script consultant for theatre, TV, and film. His short stories appear in *Pūrākau* (Penguin Random House) and *Bawaajigan: Stories of Power* (Exile Editions). He writes #hahaiku and lives by the yogic mantra: Life is short, stretch it.



Bethany Hughes is Choctaw of Oklahoma and an assistant professor at the University of Michigan. A performance scholar and cultural historian, her work focuses on the representation of Native Americans in theatrical performance and contemporary Indigenous performance. Hughes teaches Native American studies, Indigenous performance, race and musical theatre, and American performance. Her book, *Redface: Race, Performance, and Indigeneity* (NYU Press), articulates the aesthetic, racial, and political implications of the "Indian" in live theatre.

"Alright fellow star travelers, degenerates and representatives of the human race, let's setup for broadcast to get this show on the road! How's the pod lookin' Chief?"

- Mayerick from The Last Indians



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

DeLanna Studi is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation and has more than 25 years of experience as a performer, storyteller, educator, facilitator, advocate, and activist. Her theatre credits include the first national Broadway tour of the Tony Award- and Pulitzer Prize-winning play *August: Osage County;* off-Broadway's *Gloria: A Life* (Daryl Roth Theatre); *Informed Consent* (the Duke on 42nd Street); and regional theatres (Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Portland Center Stage, Cornerstone, and Indiana Repertory Theatre). Studi originated

roles in more than 18 world premieres, including 14 Native productions. A pivotal moment in her career was writing and performing *And So We Walked: An Artist's Journey Along the Trail of Tears*, based on retracing her family's footsteps along the Trail of Tears with her father. *And So We Walked* has been produced throughout the country and was the first American play chosen for the Journées Théâtrales de Carthage in Tunisia, Africa. Last year, it made its Off-Broadway debut at Minetta Lane where it was recorded for Audible. In film and television, Studi stars in the Peabody Award–winning *Edge of America; Hallmark's Dreamkeeper; Goliath; Shameless;* and *General Hospital*. She is a 2022 USA Fellow, a recipient of the Butcher Scholar Award, a MAP Fund Grant, Cherokee Preservation Grant, and the Doris Duke Performing Artist Fund. Since 2007 she has served as chair of the SAG-AFTRA National Native Americans Committee.



MANAGING DIRECTOR

Elisa Blandford has been producing for Native Voices since 2014, from world premieres and touring productions to Short Play Festivals, Playwrights Retreats, and Festivals of New Plays. She co-founded Vanguard Repertory Company and the Windmill Arts Center, a black box theatre and dance studio dedicated to fostering performance and visual arts. She has a BA in theatre from Florida State University and MBA from the University of Redlands.



ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE

Jennifer Bobiwash is an Ojibway actor, playwright, and agent of chaos from the Mississauga First Nation. Her acting theatre credits include world premieres at Perseverance Theatre, Native Voices, and La Jolla Playhouse, as well as productions at Yale Rep and on tour in Northern Alaska. More recently she was honored to step into the role of Older Irma/Ensemble in Between Two Knees by the 1491s at Seattle Rep and McCarter Theater. TV credits include Magnum P.I and Rutherford Falls. As a director, Bobiwash was invited to take part in the inaugural class of the National

Institute for Directing and Ensemble Creation at Pangea World Theatre. As a playwright, she was a Season 21 Volt lab writer with Boston's Company One Theatre and a past Artist in Residence at Thurgood Marshall College at the University of California, San Diego. She has participated in new play development programs with Blossoming at The Vagrancy Theater and MadLab at Moving Arts in Los Angeles.



PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

Sati Thyme has been involved in theatre her entire life in many different aspects, from performing to tech to management and more. She received her Bachelor's Degree in stage management from CSU Fullerton and has worked as a Stage Manager all over the Los Angeles area for the last 8 years. She has been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to go on tour around the US a few times over the past couple years, but always finds time to come back to Los Angeles

during the Halloween season to manage the interactive horror production, *Delusion*. She works year round as the Production Manager for Native Voices and is currently also on the Stage Management team at the CineVita working on their two productions, *Tarantino: Pulp Rock* and *The Brat Pack*.

NATIVE VOICES

Native Voices places Native narratives at the center of the American story in order to facilitate a more inclusive dialogue on what it means to be American. Founded in 1994 by Randy Reinholz (Choctaw) and Jean Bruce Scott, Native

Voices is dedicated to the development and production of new works for the stage written by American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and First Nations playwrights. The organization remains committed to emerging and established Native playwrights and theatre artists, to telling Native stories by and about Native people, and to providing the public access to these plays and playwrights—all with the goals of fostering greater understanding and respect of showcasing artistic voices that might otherwise not be heard.



The Autry is a museum dedicated to exploring and sharing the stories, experiences, and perceptions of the diverse peoples of the American West, connecting the past to the present to inspire our shared future. The museum presents a wide range

of exhibitions and public programs—including lectures, film, theatre, festivals, family events, and music—and performs scholarship, research, and educational outreach. The Autry's collection of more than 500,000 pieces of art and artifacts includes the Southwest Museum of the American Indian Collection, one of the largest and most significant collections of Native American materials in the United States.



Embers Young Native Playwrights Festival

JUNE 1 and 5, 2025 | Autry Museum

Native Voices is thrilled to bring back the Young Native Playwrights program for a second year! Many Native stories recount how their tribe received the First Fire. While our stories differ from Nation to Nation and region to region, one detail remains the same: there have always been people who have carried the embers of the First Fire with them, lighting future fires and ensuring the First Fire would always be with us. We believe our youth are the EMBERS, the next generation of storytellers and leaders who will light fires for future generations. In the spring. Native youth from across Turtle Island will participate in our seven-week playwriting course to nourish, elevate, and amplify their voices. Classes will culminate with their 10-minute plays being performed onstage and streamed live so that audiences from around the world can view the creative imaginings of these Native youth.

31st Festival of New Plays

AUGUST 9, 2025 | Autry Museum

Many of the works Native Voices has developed through our annual Playwrights Retreat and Festival of New Plays have gone on to enjoy successful productions across the country. As a cornerstone of our season, the Retreat and Festival provide emerging and established playwrights a rigorous opportunity to shape their plays through Distance Dramaturgy and a week-long residency in Los Angeles where collaboration occurs in daily workshops with nationally recognized directors, dramaturgs, and the Native Voices acting company. The Festival of New Plays is a series of staged readings performed at the Autry and La Jolla Playhouse.

NNPN Rolling World Premiere Haunted by Tara Moses

OCTOBER 10-26 | Greenway Court Theatre

Ash and Aaron have been dead for twenty years, and the Indigenous siblings pass their time dancing to Britney Spears, haunting the families that try to move into their house, and wondering if they'll ever be free from the shackles of racist stereotypes. As the cycle begins once more, the siblings ask: will their souls ever make it to the Spirit World? A satirical ghost story with the coolest Y2K hits, Tara Moses' *Haunted* forces us to confront the very land we walk on and our relationship (or lack thereof) with Indigenous communities today.

Tara Moses (she/her) is a citizen of Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, Mvskoke, director, award-winning playwright, and co-Founder of Groundwater Arts.

IN GRATITUDE

Your support is vital to the success of **Native Voices**, allowing us to create, develop, and produce Native theatre for a national audience. We would like to acknowledge our generous supporters.

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