

LA GORDA

By: Ramón Griffiero

Performances
March 11 & 12
7:30 PM

June Sadowski Kruszewski Studio Theatre
Post-show talks with Ramón Griffiero

Co-sponsored by:

Rubin Center for the Visual Arts, College of Liberal Arts, Department of English,
Chicano Studies Department, Creative Writing Department, Center for Inter-
American and Border Studies, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Translated by Adam Versényi
Directed by Martín Balmaceda
Choreography by rayven armijo

An artistic research project with the
support of the UTEP Department of
Theatre and Dance



UTEP DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND DANCE

Faculty-Research Production

LA GORDA

WRITTEN BY

RAMÓN GRIFFERO

TRANSLATED BY

ADAM VERSÉNYI

DIRECTED BY

MARTÍN BALMACEDA

CHOREOGRAPHER

RAYVEN ARMIJO

Stage Manager

*AARON ALMEIDA

Costume & Scenic Design

ARELY GARCIA

Vocal Director

*SEBASTIAN CALDERON

Lighting Design

*JULIAN RODRIGUEZ

Research Assistant

FERNANDA AHUED

Sound Design

*SEAN MAGUIRE

*UTEP THEATRE AND DANCE STUDENT

HOUSE POLICIES

PLEASE SILENCE ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES.

Kindly turn off watch and phone alarms, mobile phone ringers, and all other electronic devices. Text messaging is not permitted during the performance. Food and beverages are also prohibited inside the theatre.

SEATING POLICY

Productions begin on time. Generally, the theater will open for seating 30 minutes before start of show.

DURATION

1 hour
No Intermission

NO LATE ENTRY

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOS

Photos are strictly prohibited during the performance. The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.

UTEP OFFICIAL

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As members of the University of Texas at El Paso community, we acknowledge that we are meeting on unceded indigenous land. We would like to recognize and pay our respects to our indigenous people with long ties to the immediate region.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



With this artistic research production of *La Gorda*, by renowned Chilean playwright Ramón Griffero, we wander through the fragile, exposed territory of the body. We explore the body as a living archive of desire, shame, memory, and the marks these things leave upon us.

In the play we meet Loreto, "La Gorda," a young woman who stands at the crossroads of ridicule and longing. She inhabits a body that others define before she can speak, a body turned into metaphor, joke, or accusation. Yet beneath the labels aimed at her visage pulses a fierce interior world; sensual, intelligent, contradictory, and tender. Through Loreto, we examine a body that does not fit within the edges of fashion's narrow frame, confronting a body that refuses the polished images demanded by advertising, politics, and polite conversation. How do we make sense of a world that praises cultural diversity yet judges and punishes it in the body?

In our collaborative staging, we allow the body to become excessive, luminous, and unapologetic. We ask, what happens when the body that has been disciplined decides to dance? When does the body that has been silenced begin to name its hunger? And it is here that the stage becomes a mirror to reveal. We see how the body's characteristics are weaponized, reduced to symbols, recruited into ideologies, flattened into slogans. The body becomes a thing to be possessed, corrected, and improved. But the body is also the terrain that sweats, trembles, desires, and dies. This production does not seek to resolve the conflict, rather our protagonist, Loreto, holds space for reflection, allowing herself to be vulnerable and defiant, wounded and radiant. In doing so, we imagine a theatre where the stigmatized body is not a problem to be solved but a presence to be witnessed. *La Gorda's* world becomes poetry, and visibility becomes her act of resistance.

Working with a cast of young actors eager to investigate these themes and to challenge outdated discourses has truly been a joy. I also had the pleasure of collaborating with UTEP professor and choreographer, Rayven Armijo, whose work beautifully blends theatre with dance through our creative dialogue, and embodied expression.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped make this project possible and supported Mr. Griffero's visit to UTEP.

Special thanks to the Department of Theatre and Dance, The College of Liberal Arts, The Department of English, Chicano Studies Department, Creative Writing Department, The Rubin Center, and the Center for Inter-American and Border Studies/Department of Sociology and Anthropology. I am grateful for the support from my UTEP community: Dr. Henry MacCarthy, Samantha Nava, Carolyn Cubit-Tsutsui, Adrian Salas, Phillip D. Hill, Aaron Almeida, Sean Maguire, Julian Rodriguez, Arely Garcia, Sebastian Calderon, and Johnathan Cereceres.

— Martin Balmaceda



CHOREOGRAPHER'S NOTE

In *La Gorda*, I was drawn to the body that watches and the body that longs to be seen. Set in the aftermath of dictatorship, the play holds a quiet tension between visibility and desire — between belonging and distance. We approached the choreography through vernacular and ballroom/club rhythms, drawing from social dance traditions that carry memory, flirtation, community, and performance. Both vernacular dance and ballroom culture ask performers to develop a recognizable presence within a shared rhythm — a lineage where competition and authenticity meet, and where style becomes signature.

Working in close collaboration with director Martín Balmaceda, whose theatrical approach is deeply physical, the choreography developed as a shared dramaturgy of the body. Martín proposed staging the action across a series of 4x4 platforms — a structure inspired by dance events where performers claim small stages and negotiate space through presence and style. That architecture resonated with my own movement history in the 1990s ballroom and club scene, dancing behind house artists and working as a go-go dancer. Those experiences — where rhythm, individuality, and spatial awareness are everything — returned to shape how this world moves.

In rehearsal, we worked from the inside out, tuning into internal frequency before external display. Each performer listens differently, discovering movement that feels truthful before it becomes aesthetic. From that place, the choreography becomes a negotiation of space: bodies learning how to stand together, how to diverge, and how to claim presence within the group.

Within this structure, *La Gorda* searches for her place — learning that sometimes the most powerful movement is not perfect unison, but the courage to stand slightly apart and claim space anyway.

This work was developed alongside UTEP students and members of El Paso's professional artistic community, whose presence and vulnerability shaped the movement language from the ground up.

— rayven armijo



CAST



*Jade Cervantes (Sam/Loreto) is a sophomore pursuing her BFA in Theatre with a focus on performance. She is excited for her second show here at UTEP and hopes to continue doing them in the future. Recent productions include *Into the Woods*, *Anybody for Tea*, and *Quixote Nuevo*.



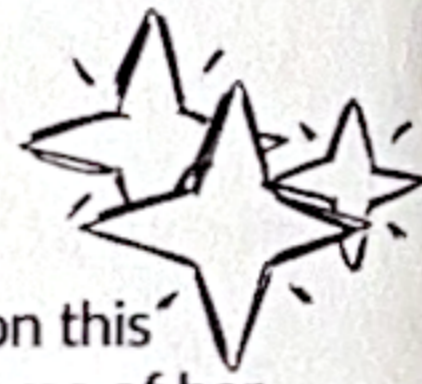
Sydney Monroe Gaglio (Sam/Loreto) is a theatre artist who returned home to El Paso four years ago, after 8 years away in New York for university, work, and life. Sydney is the Executive Director and Production Stage Manager of Madeline Park Shakespeare Festival and Office Assistant for El Paso Opera. When not working on productions, Syd can be found over at Keystone Heritage Park doing plant and wildlife education.



*Carlos Huereca (Matt/Jorge/Lifeguard) is currently a Junior at UTEP pursuing a degree in Theatre Arts with a concentration in Performance. You may have seen him in *Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* at UTEP or *The Addams Family* and *Dracula a Comedy of Terrors* at NMSU. He is excited to share the story of *La Gorda* and hopes it provokes as much change in the audience as it has in him.



*Brianna Ramirez (Ana/La Pancha) is a senior at UTEP pursuing a BFA in Theatre Performance. Past shows include *Romeo & Juliet* (Juliet), *Quixote Nuevo* (Rosario), and *Plumas Negras* (Wife Crow). Aside from acting, she spends her time working in the scene shop. She is excited for what the future holds and thanks her family and besties for their unconditional support.



*Valeyda Parada (Ana/La Pancha) is thrilled to be working on this project! She is pursuing her BFA in Theatre Performance. Some of her favorite past productions and roles include *Anna in the Tropics* (Conchita), *The Farnsworth Invention* (Lizette), *Treasure Island* (Trelawney). Valeyda thanks her family and friends for their constant support.



*Jade Camila Piñón (Susan/The Voice) is pursuing a BFA in Theatre with a concentration in Scenic Design. Her past work includes *Plumas Negras* (Props Designer), *Quixote Nuevo* (Magdalena and Perla), and *The River Bride* (Scenic Designer). She thanks her family, colleagues, professors and friends for their continued support. IG: @redjade_1



*Magali Vasquez (Susan/The Voice) is a Theatre Education major at UTEP. Her past work includes *POZ*, *Anna Karenina*, *Beyond Therapy*, *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, *Raising the Barre* and *A Christmas Carol*. She would like to thank her family, friends and loved ones for their support.



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CREATIVE TEAM



Martín Balmaceda (Director) is an Assistant Professor of Theatre Performance at UTEP. He is honored to direct this artistic research project of *La Gorda* and to collaborate with the powerful text of Ramón Griffero alongside a talented cast, creative team, and independent artists. Martín's artistic and scholarly work explores contemporary Latinx culture through performance, interdisciplinary collaboration, and critical inquiry. His productions and research have been presented internationally in Chile, Mexico, and Canada, as well as at venues across the U.S. Martín has worked with and presented his productions at The Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute, New York University, The Bushwick Starr, La MaMa Experimental Theatre, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Teatro IATI, Northwestern University, Sarah Lawrence College, Repertorio Español, The New Ohio Theatre, and The Cherry Arts, among others. www.martinbalmaceda.com.



rayven laticia armijo (Choreographer) is a choreographer, educator, and interdisciplinary artist whose work bridges movement, theatre, and embodied research. Her practice centers body politics, collaboration, and the relationship between performance and cultural memory. Recent collaborations include *The Tempest* at Pepperdine University (2023), directed by Cathy Thomas-Grant, and *Quixote Nuevo* (2024), directed by Martín Balmaceda, with whom she continues her collaboration on *La Gorda*. Her original works include *Génesis: A LA Revelation*, *Cósmica Lluvia*, and the dance film *Tito Ritmo* (2024), created with El Paso filmmaker Ulises Cordova and featured at the Nanlux International Film Festival across five countries. A native Angeleno, she trained in New York at The Ailey School and has choreographed internationally, including work in México and China. Earlier in her career, armijo wrote, directed, and choreographed César Chávez, presented in 2004 at the Claudia W. Keithley Theatre at Mt. San Antonio College with students, faculty, and the San Gabriel Valley community. She also appeared on *So You Think You Can Dance* (Season 4). At UTEP, she creates movement-driven theatre with students and community artists grounded in shared authorship and collective storytelling.



Ramón Griffero (Playwright) is a Stage Director, Sociologist, Cultural Manager, Academic Director, Theorist, and Essayist. He has obtained the National Award for Performing Arts in 2019 and the Loth prize - honored at the Cairo Opera House for his contribution to the development of contemporary world theater. Ramón made essential and innovative contributions to the development of culture and performing arts at creative, political, educational, theoretical, and cultural management levels. These contributions have generated a prominent national and international presence in these areas, positioning him as a precursor of scenic postmodernism in Ibero-America. His productions reflect the spirit of the times, and some of his work have become emblematic pieces of our theatrical history. He has also actively participated in social movements, building cultural spaces of resistance against the dictatorship (El Trolley) and, subsequently, in defense of art against globalization. Ramón has established conceptual frameworks for the construction of our cultural institutions. His dramaturgies and essays are published and translated into English, Portuguese, French, German, Galician, Arabic, Italian, and Polish, and his works have been presented in countries across America, the Caribbean, and Europe.



CREATIVE TEAM



Adam Versényi (Translator) is Professor of Dramaturgy in the Department of Dramatic Art and Senior Dramaturg for PlayMakers Repertory Company. A theatre scholar, dramaturg, critic, translator, and director, he is the author of *Theatre in Latin America: Religion, Politics, and Culture From Cortés to the 1980s* (Cambridge University Press), *The Theatre of Sabina Berman: The Agony of Ecstasy and Other Plays* (Southern Illinois University Press), *Ramón Griffero: Your Desires in Fragments and Other Plays* (Oberon Books), and *The Dramaturgy of Space* (Methuen), among others. He has written widely on Latin American and U.S. Latiné theatre and performance, dramaturgy, theatre production, and theatrical translation. He is the founder and editor of *The Mercurian: A Theatrical Translation Review*, an on-line journal. Dramaturg for PlayMakers Repertory Company since 1988, he has also worked at Yale Repertory Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, New York Shakespeare Festival, and La Mama E.T.C, as well as other regional theatres and universities, both nationally and internationally. He received his B.A. in the Combined Major in Literature in English and Spanish from Yale College, and his M.F.A. and D.F.A. in Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism from the Yale School of Drama.



*Aaron Almeida (Stage Manager) is very excited to make his official debut at the UTEP Theatre and Dance Dept. as Stage Manager for *La Gorda!* His recent works are *The SpongeBob Musical* (Old Man Jenkins), *The Farnsworth Invention* (Lippincott), and *Cats* (Prop Master). Thank you, entire *La Gorda* Team for this experience and thank you Martin & Carolyn for trusting me with this opportunity!



*Sean Maguire (Sound Designer) makes his UTEP debut in this production of *La Gorda!* He would like to thank his mom and dad for making all of this possible along with the whole *La Gorda* production team. As always if you can hear the show then he's done his job right!



Arely Garcia (Scenic/Costume/Props Designer) is a recent UTEP graduate, getting her BFA in Theatre Design and Technology this past May. This is her third project since graduating, following costume design for MPSF's *Romeo & Juliet* last fall, and prop design for EPO's *La Boheme* earlier this year. She's excited to work on her first project as both scenic and costume designer. She thanks her parents and family for supporting her always.



*Julian Rodriguez (Lighting Designer) began his theatre journey as a performance major, appearing in productions such as *Almost, Maine*, before discovering his passion for lighting and design. His most recent work was *Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* (Asst. Lighting Designer). When not working in theatre, Julian enjoys filming short videos and experimenting with creative storytelling through the camera lens.

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CREATIVE TEAM



*Sebastian Calderon (Vocal Director) is an undergrad student at UTEP. He's pursuing a career as a choral director, majoring in music education with a focus on voice. Sebastian is currently a secretary officer of the border voices of ACDA at UTEP, a chorale member under the direction of Dr. Elisa Fraser Wilson, and a choral director of SINGS New Generations with his assistant, Dr. Phillip D. Hill.



Fernanda Ahued (Research Assistant) is a theatre graduate of Universidad de las Américas Puebla, Mexico. She completed international diploma programs and currently works as an Assistant Director on stage productions. Her professional experience includes work with Instituto Municipal de Arte y Cultura de Puebla and projects supported by Programa de Estimulo a la Creación y Desarrollo Artístico.



Johnathan Cereceres (Photographer) is a versatile photographer specializing in performing arts, event, landscape, and portrait photography, with a portfolio spanning the Madeline Park Shakespeare Festival, El Paso Opera, El Paso UTEP Opera, government offices, urban planning firms, and nonprofits. Dedicated to preserving the lived experiences of the region, his photography reflects a deep connection to place, space, and culture.



*Gabriela (Gaby) Muñoz (Co-Choreographer) is pursuing a BFA in Dance with a concentration in Choreographic Studies and a BA in Linguistics and Bilingualism at UTEP. Her work explores movement as language. Collaborating on *La Gorda* supported these interests, and she is delighted to have contributed to the project.



PRODUCTION TEAM

Carolyn Cubit-Tsutsui (Director of Production)
 Cynthia Esparza (Scenic Mentor/Technical Director)
 Enrique Morales (Scene Shop Supervisor/Technical Director)
 Clarissa Sanchez (Costume Shop Supervisor)
 Victor Maldonado (Lighting & Sound Mentor)
 *Julian Rodriguez (Master Electrician)
 *Sean Maguire (Sound Operator)
 *Luis Hiram Castaños-Vale (House Manager)
 Samantha Michelle Nava (Director of Audience Development)



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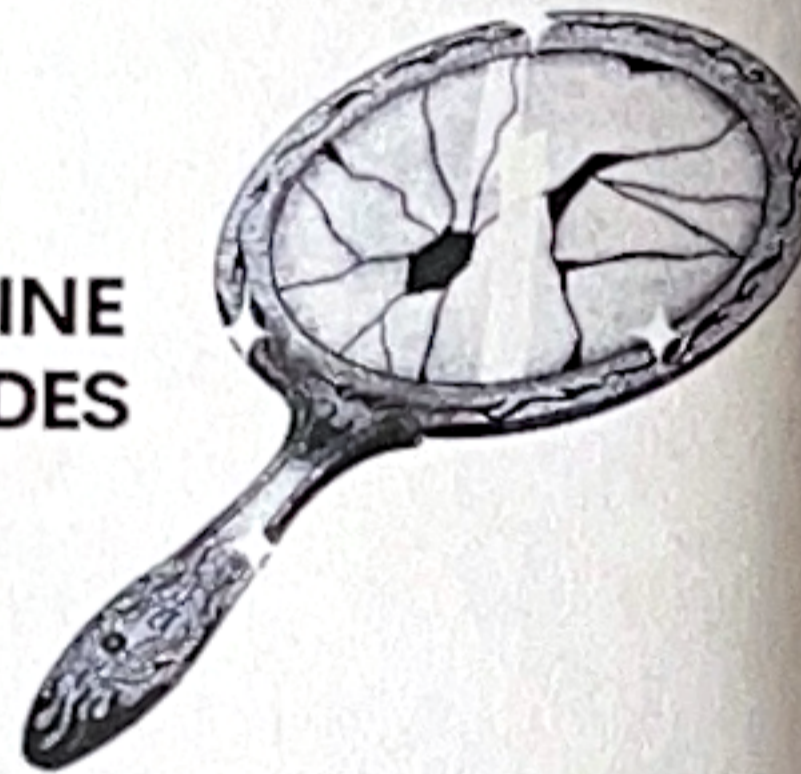
IN ANOTHER MOMENT

WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY JADE CERVANTES



DON'T LOOK MY WAY
I'LL JUST HIDE BEHIND
BUT I'D SEE HIS EYES
AND HE'D SEE MINE
LET THE WATER TAKE ME BY SURPRISE
AND HE'D BE MINE

DON'T LOOK MY WAY
PROMISE I'M JUST SHY
FOR THE FIRST TIME
YOUR TOUCH COMPLETES MINE
HANDS RIPPLE DOWN MY SIDES
MY OH MY
I FEEL DIVINE



SOULS INTERTWINED
INTERTWINED

WASH ME AWAY
TILL I DIE
BUT HE'D BE MINE
HE'D BE MINE
HE'D BE MINE
HE'D BE MINE
HE'D BE MINE



In diving into the character of Loreto, I found that she is me and I am her. As I explored what that truly meant, I felt inspired to write. While the show is a testament to how certain people are treated based on what society deems as beautiful. It has also created a space for someone like Loreto to shine, feel passion, love, intimacy, and desire at a level that most do not have to opportunity to do. To Loreto, this song might be just another love letter, but truthfully, this is my love letter to the show. - Jade



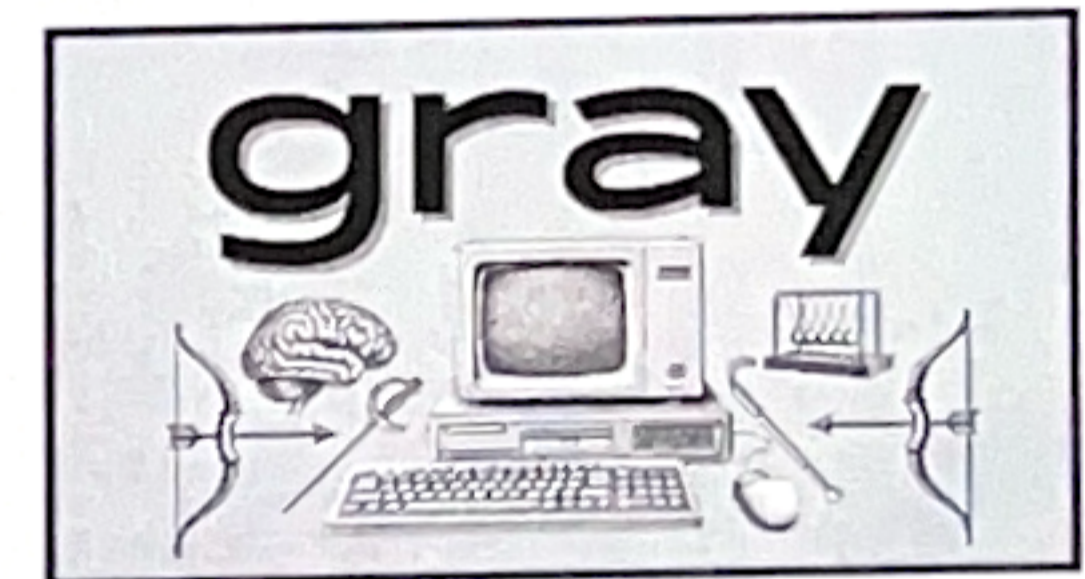
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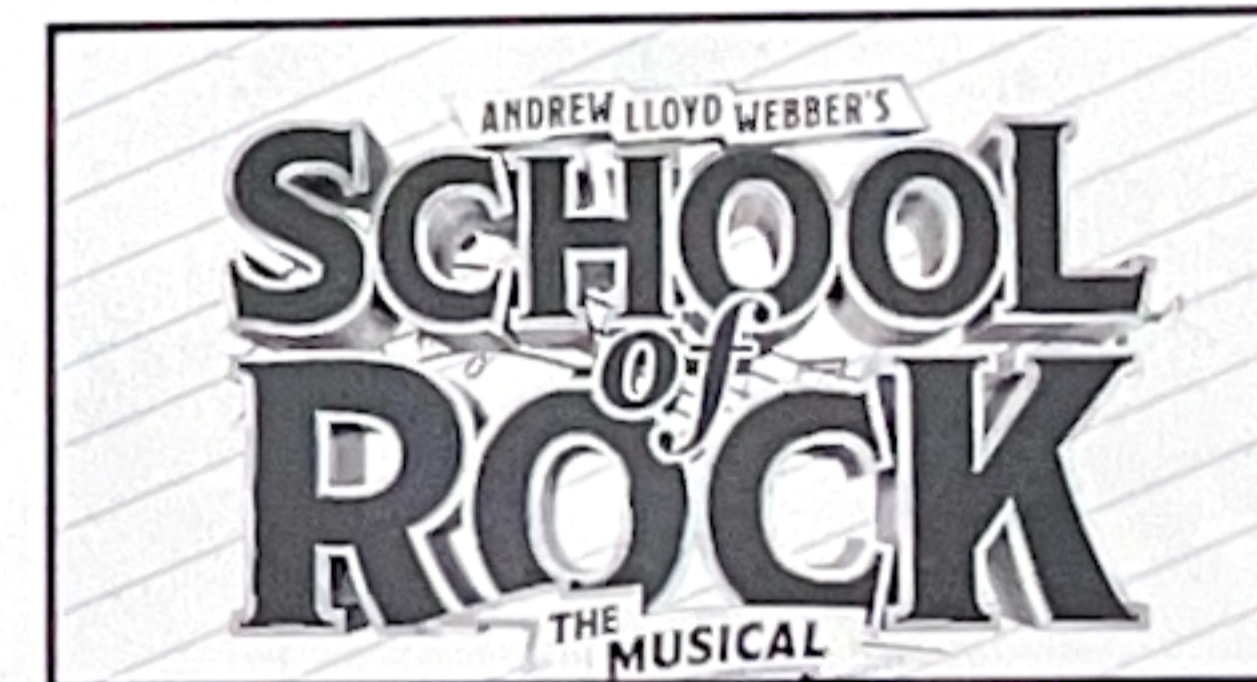
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