BROWN BAG THEATER COMPANY & K.B. THEATRE PRESENT
a MOON COLLECTIVE PRODUCTION
TZAQIK
a tale, of many
directed by Shelby Caughron & Jesús López Vargas
choreographed by Piper Bockstahler

TZAQIK | a tale, of many

in the Mayan Ki'che': **(v) to fall; to drop; to lose.**

WRITER'S NOTES

Jesús E. López Vargas

I created this show with a primary purpose: to tell a story about identity that could be shared on stage by the many, regardless of our backgrounds. Identity is an individual and private journey, a journey that lasts a life-time; it is precious, delicate, intrinsic… everyone has at least once in their life asked themselves: *who am I?* Our main character, the *winged* God Xb'alanque, embarks on this story with the core goal to cure human sadness, yet he soon finds himself immersed in a journey of identity that forces him to deconstruct all that he has been taught to know.

Through its initial writing process this show slowly morphed into an episodic structure, as different perspectives shine light on different matters. There are also many stories that I wanted to voice through this show, from personal experiences and struggles, but I wanted to share them through specific points of view, views that challenged my own. Ensemble shows, in my opinion, always paint a broader picture. Two heads don't always think better than one, but four or sixteen definitely do. One's identity might be a private matter, but the human experience innately transcends singularity.

Without giving away too many spoilers and boring you with my prose, if there is anything that I wish you could take away after tonight, is to allow yourself to be at peace even when not knowing. Our contemporary society is addicted to "knowing" & "understanding", it is an insatiable hunger, as we are taught to fear that which we are unfamiliar with. I hope that you have found — or allow yourself to find — a sort of private peace, even in the unknown. Just as my mamá & papá have found this peace in their God, I have found my own peace in other people and their stories. Tonight is a celebration of this peace… tonight I wish you the best in your own private journey!

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Shelby Caughron

We have treated *Tzaqik* with as much fluidity as we would a devised piece, allowing everyone in the room to have a say in how this piece was created, building off our performer's impulses. We went through multiple drafts of the script and what you are seeing tonight is the handprint of a large group of people. This was a company effort. *Tzaqik* shows moments from many different cultures from around the world, it is meant to be a story that all people can relate to, so we pulled inspiration from the diverse identities of our cast and team. With that, I must say that at the center of the piece is the Latinx culture. The source material of the piece is from *this* culture and it is also the lens through which both directors have looked through.

Due to the many different languages used to tell this story, we focused as much as possible in using movement as our primary way to get the meaning of the words across beyond verbal language. All the performers will be using their bodies just as much as their language to tell you this story. As you watch this piece, I challenge you to move past the barrier of language and not rely on it as your sole guide to the story. Allow the movement of the bodies on the stage to be your guide when you do not understand the words. Most importantly, allow the human condition that we all share to be the thing that guides you through this piece. If you let that guide you, I promise you will find yourself immersed in its world. "*You are further. / Your pain is only part of who you are, / though it is not all you are. / And you, / you are movement. / You are change. / Have faith / it will all be okay.*"

When you experience life changing sorrow, grief or abuse what do you do with it? Do you dwell on the moment that changed your life forever? Do you blame others? The world? Most importantly, how do you move past tragedies like this? When tragedy strikes you, it can feel impossible to see what is on the other side. When you cannot see through to the other side, what is it that pushes you through? Define…. *faith*? Define *you*.

TIME & SETTING

Tonight, the Moon & Earth

CAST

(by denomination & order of appearance)

Xb'alanque (our winged God) ---- Félix José Colón
Soul ---------- Katherine Lingle

— THE GENTLE GODS —

Ix U ---------- Erika Clark
Estro ---------- Jessica Montez
Frija ---------- Erica Bogan
Tato ---------- Evan Lugo
Aarushi ---------- Pallavi Rajan

— OTHER DEITIES —

Mother Earth ---------- Natalia Chambers
Batali ---------- Evan Lugo
Krii ---------- Taylor Payne
Zipacna ---------- Freya Starks

— MORTALS —

Pyramid, body ---------- Ashley Onks
Watcher ---------- Katherine Lingle
Feeler ---------- Isabella Harris
Pyramid, voice ---------- Violeta Ruiz-Lopez
Heart ---------- Emily McKeon
Lover ---------- Carina Negrete
Ashah ---------- Violeta Ruiz-Lopez
Carmen ---------- Carina Negrete
Refugees ---------- Erica Bogan & Pallavi Rajan
Youth ---------- Pallavi Rajan
Amika ---------- Isabella Harris
Ixtab ---------- Evan Lugo

— SPITHA, MOVEMENT CHOIR —

Natalia Chambers, Taylor Payne, Ashely Onks, Katherine Lingle,
Isabella Harris, Emily McKeon & Freya Starks

Brandon Ray (guest, preshow performer)

run time aprox. 1hr. 30min.

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SCENE BREAKDOWN

— PROLOGUE —
We find ourselves on the *Moon*, at the beginning of Xb'alanque's journey;
other *Gods* having heard his prayer have come to help.

— PIECE 1 —
Now on *Earth*, Xb'alanque is guided to his first *human* tragedy,
an ordinary building hiding inhumane secrets within its walls.

— PIECE 2 —
Xb'alanque journeys to a second *human* tragedy, a story of loss;
here we also presence disrespect to the kindest of all *Mothers*.

— PIECE 3 —
The *Gods* take action once again, this time helping Xb'alanque learn
an indispensable truth about *identity*.

— PIECE 4 —
We are led to our next stop, a collection of global stories about flight,
belonging, freedom, and the cost of survival. What is the price of truth?

— PIECE 5 —
After the happenings in piece 4, one of our *Gods* decides to take a detour…
Sometimes one must look at our *youth* in order to find unaltered truths.

— PIECE 6 —
Our protagonists feels the *Earth* as it trembles beneath.
Each must first find their *poem*.

— PIECE 8 —
Faith.

— EPILOGUE —
A lonely soul, a silent prayer,
the need for *balance*.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

Tzaqik | a tale, of many was written to be multilingual, for it tells the stories of many across our world. And although the **many** might share ideas, experiences, fears and hopes, they do not necessarily share the same tongues. Differences are what makes us stronger as a global collective. Differences do not diverge us, they complement us.

The use of verse was inspired by multiple stories passed down generation to generation through spoken word, in which rhythm & rhyme have eased their preservation throughout the years.

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ARTISTIC TEAM

Co-Directors ---------- Shelby Caughron & Jesús E. López Vargas
Choreographer ---------- Piper Bockstahler
with the choreographic contributions of Pallavi Rajan (Piece 5) & Katie Lingle (Piece 6)
Music Composer (Prologue, Pieces 1, 2, 5, 6, 8 & Epilogue) ---------- Dimitri Soto
Sound Designer & Music Composter (Pieces 3 & 4) ---------- Ezra Anisman
Lighting Designer ---------- Nita Mendoza
Assistant Lighting Designers ---------- Jacqueline Gonzalez & Anna Olson
Projections Designer ---------- Arielle Singer
Projections Content Creator ---------- Kyrsten Goodrich
Costume, Hair & Makeup Designer ---------- Athziri Morales
Associate Costume Designer ---------- Meghan Minguez-Marshall
Headpiece Designer & Technician ---------- Maricarmen Vargas Rodriguez
Scenic Designers ---- Jesús E. López Vargas, Merle DeWitt III & Nita Mendoza
Scenic Artistis ----- Jessica Keasberry, Jacqueline Gonzalez & Kyrsten Goodrich
Dramaturgy ---------- Herman Gomez
Publicity Artist ---------- Jesús E. López Vargas

PRODUCTION TEAM

Production & Company Manager ---------- Jessica Keasberry
Technical Director ---------- Merle DeWitt III
xMPL Technical Director ---------- Bruce Warner
Production Stage Manager ---------- Samson Lautzenheiser
Assistant Stage Managers ---------- Matthew Byrd & Mason Bergenholtz
Producers ---- Jesús López, Lonnie Alcaraz, Merle DeWitt III & Jessica Keasberry
Development ---------- Jesús López, Lonnie Alcaraz, BBTC Ensemble & K.B. Theatre

MENTORS

Project Mentors ---------- Lonnie Alcaraz, Juliette Carrillo & Lindsay Gilmour
Projections Design Mentor ---------- David Murakami

SHOW CREW

Front of House Management ---------- Members of *Moon Collective*
Sound Mixer ---------- Pan-Pan Guo
Costume Supersivor ---------- Ashley Castro
Lighting Board Op ---------- Anna Olson
Sound Board Op ---------- Erich Barden
Projections Board Op ---------- Peter Newell

CTSA STAFF

Facilities Manager ---------- Jeff Stube
Dept. of Drama, Management ---------- Marcus L. Beeman & Ciara Holbach
Director of Marketing & Communications, CTSA ---------- Jaime DeJong

NOTES ON THE "POPOL VUH"

What is the Popol Vuh?
The *Popol Vuh* is one of the most important prehispanic Mayan stories that are still preserved to this date. It is important to note "prehispanic" as most indigenous art in America was destroyed after the Spanish conquest of the XV & XVI centuries, and because today there are still many works of important and beautiful literature being created by desceendats of the Maya peoples. The *Popol Vuh* was passed down generation to generation by the Ki'che' people through spoken word, and it wasn't until the mid XVI Century that the story was written down for the first time, in Spanish, by Francisco Ximénez. The *Popol Vuh* tells of the creation of our universe through multiple stories.

What is Ki'che'?
Ki'che' refers to a group of indegenous Maya peoples in America as well as to their language, which is still widely used today as they make up a large percentage of the population in Guatemala and other Latin American countries.

Is this show a retelling of the Popol Vuh?
No, *Tzaqik* is not at all a retelling of the *Popol Vuh*. Our show was inspired by multiple cultures from across the world, by their people, their stories, their arts, their resilience & their celebrations. Jesús López wrote this show while exploring his roots & his spirituality, and while doing so he decided to pay respect to his Latin American history - as a way of saying thanks. By immersing himself on various Latin American arts, he came to the realization that most people in the United States have never heard of the *Popol Vuh*, although they are familiarized with other epics from around the world such as *Beowulf, The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the *Divine Comedy*, among others. Jesús took this opportunity to share with his team & our audience the beauty and richness of the *Popol Vuh*.

If this show does not tell the story of the Popol Vuh, what are its links to Tzaqik?
Tzaqik's main character is Xb'alanque who is one of the many characters from the *Popol Vuh*, his and his twin brother's adventures make up a large part of the book's content. Our show presents only some of this character's background during the "Prologue". In the *Popol Vuh*, at the end of the twin brother's journey, it is mentioned that they "go up" to the Sun & the Moon, and that is where their story ends. *Tzaqik* takes place today, about 5,000 years after that exact moment, Xb'alanque having grown wings to reach the Moon. That which propels our show is the question of "What happens to a fearless yet gentle deity when they are forced to observe the suffering of human kind from the Moon, unable to intervene with their tragedies?"

What source material was referenced while creating this show?
Jesús used multiple editions & translations of the original text of the *Popol Vuh* as well as multiple versions of other epics, stories, etc. Various dictionaries, articles, books & digital databases of literary & visual reference were also used during the writing & editing processes, as well as during rehearsals. For reference on all of of our resources & citations please contact Jesús López Vargas.

Brown Bag Theater Company is an ensemble of artists & scholars who aim to produce engaging & captivating artistic work that reflects & empowers the Latinx communities. We create various opportunities for young Latinx individuals and our allies within the performing arts. At **BBTC**, we believe that the discipline of theatre is a cultural force capable of transforming our community and we bolster this believe whilst celebrating the richness & pride of Latinx culture. **BBTC** is mainly run by students and alumns of UC, Irvine.

K.B. Theatre Company tells stories that challenge and wake our audiences, motivate and teach ours artists, and build a community of respect, dedication, and truth. We were founded on love for our work and our community. We focus on providing a professional and safe space for artists of the performance arts to work and experiment in their craft. **K.B.** was founded in April 2018, at El Paso, TX., with their production of *Mary's Wedding* by Stephen Massicotte, directed by artistic director Stephanie Carrillo, starring Katie Daniel & Jared Berry.

BIOS OF THE CREATORS

JESUS LOPEZ VARGAS | WRITER & CO-DIRECTOR is currently a M.F.A. in Stage Management candidate at UCI, having graduated with a B.F.A. in Technical Theater from the University of Texas at El Paso. As an aspiring producer of the performance arts, Jesús has produced, written & directed four original productions: *RED* (TX, 2017), */Echo* (TX, 2018), *In This Light | There is Silence* (CA, 2019), & *Tzaqik | a tale, of many* (CA, 2020). His next project is a collaboration with choreographer Brandon Ray, titled *HardCandy*. In the Summer of 2016, Jesús published his first book of poetry & photography titled *I See Red*, for young adults. In 2018, alongside Stephanie Carrillo, Merle DeWitt III & Nancy Batres, Jesús founded K.B. Theatre Company in El Paso, TX., a company which focuses on supporting young local artists with their career development, partnered with *thChrch*. When available, Jesús also works freelance as a photographer, lighting designer, project manager, translator, writer, and as a publicity artist. He was proudly born & raised in México. Jesús would like to dedicate this production to all of his badass ancestros. You can see most of his work, including some of his fine-art photography & poetry, by visiting his website at jelopez-stage.com

SHELBY CAUGHRON | CO-DIRECTOR is excited to be back at her alma mater to share this story! She has experience in various areas of theatre including acting, directing, choreography, theatre management & stage management. Her directorial credits include many devised pieces, most recently being *Untold: A Verbatim Play* with MiraCosta College Theatre. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Drama from UCI as well as an Associate Degree in Drama from MiraCosta College. She is the Assistant Box Office Manager and Production Assistant for the Moonlight Amphitheatre. Thank you, Mom, Morgan, Layth and the rest of my peeps for supporting me and my dreams. I dedicate this show to my father who has always been and will always be the inspiration for my work.

PIPER BOCKSTAHLER | CHOREOGRAPHER is a movement artist and choreographer currently a junior at the University of California, Irvine completing a B.F.A. in Choreography & Performance, and a minor in Management. Growing up in Sacramento, California, she began dancing at the age of 3, and has been training under Kelli Leighton, owner of Leighton Dance Project, for nine years. At Leighton Dance Project, she trained in all styles including contemporary, jazz, hip-hop, tap, ballet, pointe, and modern. She has assisted Kelli all over California and has apprenticed in her professional company, CORE Contemporary Dance, in productions such as *The Doorway* and *Scorched Wings*. Over the past few years she has had the opportunity to have mentorships under Will Johnston, Marissa Osato, Amy Berokoff, Adam Peterson, Mike Esperanza & Stacey Tookey. After graduating college, she aspires to join a professional contemporary-based company in Los Angeles or New York, explore work in the commercial world, and present her own choreographic works. Her work has been presented at Leighton Dance Project, UC Irvine, and high schools across California.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR MAIN SUPPORTERS

UCI Illuminations, UCI Associate Graduate Students, UCI Drama, Julia Reinhard Lupton, Juliette Carrillo, Lonnie Alcaraz, Holly Poe Durbin,

Cynthia Alvarez, Adriana Dominguez, J. Luis Echeverria, Diana Gutierrez, Don Hill, Kelley Ho, Caitlin Kirk, Kinsey Lahn, Saraha Medina, Sophia Metcalf, Kate Rosloff, Kyrra Thiel, Linda Ureña, Jialai Zhou, Daniella Ballester, the xMPL Crew, Maria del Carmen Vargas Rodriguez, Sergio Enrique López Briones, Dr. Tomás Barrientos & Matilde Beatriz Ivic Perez from the "*Instituto de Investigaciones de la Universidad del Valle de Guatemala*", Jane Page, Pam Marsen & Garrett P. A. Gagnon.

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WE WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE ARE PERFORMING ON THE UNSEATED, ANCESTRAL LAND OF

the **TONGVA INDEGENOUS PEOPLES**

*"**Tzaqik** is a lyrical, modern epic that challenges our perceptions of pain and suffering while examining the human condition through multicultural, historically informed perspectives. Told across several mediums of performance art while utilizing multiple languages, the show's universal messages of solidarity and self-acceptance exist as strong juxtapositions to its heavy themes and dark source material. Community is the connective tissue that unites all pieces.*

*Primarily inspired by the mythology of the Mayan K'iche' people - Popol Vuh (The Book of the People), **Tzaqik** has a deep understanding of the mythos found in various ancient cultures and how they translate to modern struggles. It is billed as "a tale, of many" and immerses the audience in differing perspectives of various mythologies, cultures, and art forms. In doing so, the show is both a deconstruction of the human condition – linking experiences of pain and hope across cultures – and a celebration of diversity and identity. It asks us what it is to be human and then lets us find the answer over the course of a versatile night of art brought to life in excruciating detail."*

— HERMAN GOMEZ, DRAMATURGE | *hermangomez.net*

PRODUCED BY

UCI Illuminations

MOON collective

BROWN BAG THEATER CO.

K|B THEATRE COMPANY

CONTENT WARNINGS

HAZE, STROBE LIGHTS, LOUD NOISES,
MENTIONS OF PHYSICAL & SEXUAL ABUSE