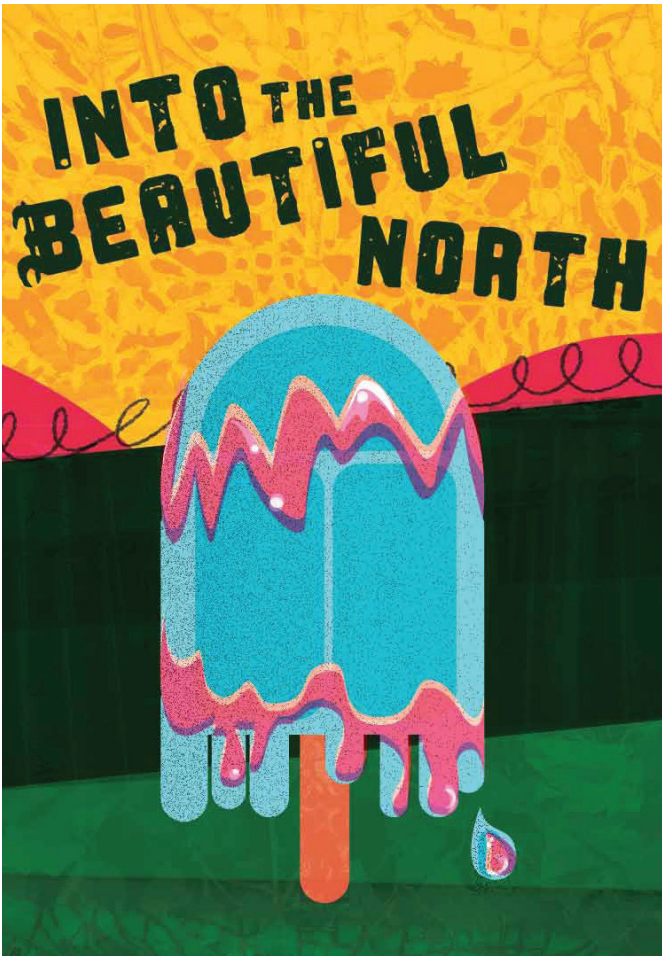
CPP Department of Theatre and New Dance presents



November 13–22, 2026

University Theatre

Building 25

The 2026–2027 Season is dedicated to Brian Newman.

Cal Poly Pomona

College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences
THEATRE AND NEW DANCE

INTO THE BEAUTIFUL NORTH

Written by Karen Zacarías
Adapted from the novel by Luis Alberto Urrea
Directed by Bernardo Solano

Featuring

Elianna Arredondo, Christopher Hernandez, Antonieta Gutierrez, Katherin Jasso Montiel, Jillian Litonjua, Mac, River Myaskovsky, David Olea, Connor Rice, Reizo Webber, Karla Vences

Stage Manager
Madison Diaz

Scenic Designer
Sam Ng

Costume Designer
Aylin Galvan

Lighting Designer
Jesse Portillo

Sound Designer
Laura Jones

Hair & Makeup Designer
Malayah Wilford

Props Designer
Ellis Buongiorno

Dramaturg
Dylan Vidal Frederick

There will be one 10-minute intermission.

Content Notice: The performance will include the use of homophobic and racial slurs, on stage violence, some sexual humor and the use of firearm-shaped props.

INTO THE BEAUTIFUL NORTH is produced at the San Diego Repertory Theatre as part of a National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere. Other partnering theatres are Milagro Theatre Portland (Oregon), Central Works Theater Company (California), and 16th Street Theatre (Illinois). For more information please visit www.nnpn.org.
INTO THE BEAUTIFUL NORTH is produced by special arrangement with THE GERSH AGENCY, 9465 WILSHIRE BLVD., 6th FLOOR, BEVERLY HILLS, CA 90212.

Director's Note

You don't often see a play addressing immigration at the United States' southern border with Mexico as a comedy. Based on a novel that was inspired by an American Western that was based on a Japanese Samurai film, *Into The Beautiful North* has a multilayered genealogy, much like our American populace. Genres blend with genres, creating a unique lens on what it means when narco-traffickers threaten to take over a small Mexican town, causing an intrepid trio of young people to take enormous risks to cross the border into the United States to recruit Mexicans to return and defend the town. And that's just in the first few scenes.

Thanks to playwright Karen Zacarías for writing this funny, dangerous and touching play that challenges negative immigrant stereotypes and further reminds us that the places we come from are worth protecting in our hearts and minds, in spirits and deeds. And thanks to all the students, staff and faculty who continually meet the moment.

--Bernardo Solano, Director

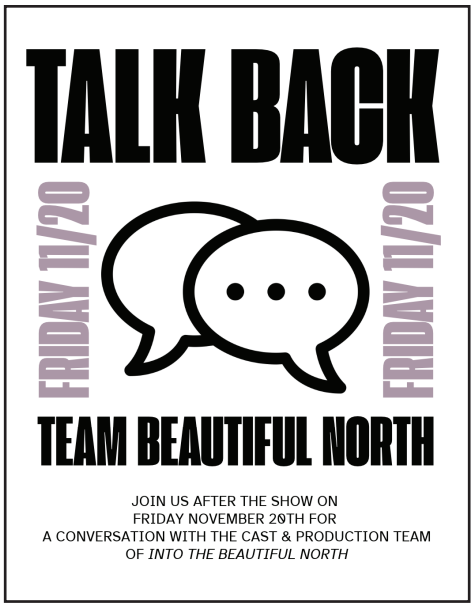
CAST

Nayeli Cervantes ..... Karla Vences
Vampi ..... Jillian Litonjua
Tacho ..... Reizo Webber
Irma ..... Katherin Jasso Montiel
Atomiko/Ensemble ..... Christopher Hernandez
Don Pepe/Ensemble ..... River Myaskovsky
Officer Arnie/Ensemble ..... Mac
Garcia-Garcia/Ensemble ..... David Olea
Araceli/Ensemble ..... Antonieta Gutierrez
Angel/Ensemble ..... Elianna Arredondo
Matt/Ensemble ..... Connor Rice

PRODUCTION TEAM

Production Managers ..... Jade Cagalawan, Harold Kast
Director of Theatre Facilities ..... Jonathan Bastow
Technical Director ..... Kenneth Blenc
Costume Shop Manager ..... Lexy Perez
Lighting Design Mentor ..... Jesse Portillo
Dramaturg Mentor ..... Dr. Joshua Truett

Community Engagement
Committee Co-Chairs ..... Laura Epperson, Dr. Joshua Truett
Vocal Coach ..... Sayda Trujillo
Fight Choreography Coach ..... Donzell Lewis
Intimacy Coordinator ..... Carly DW Bones
Assistant Director ..... Sebastien Elkin
Assistant Stage Manager ..... Christian Martinez
Head Electrician ..... Janelle Favreau
Scenic Charge Artist ..... Lupe Linares
LX Programmer/Board Operator ..... John Bolinger
Audio Programmer/Board Operator ..... Macallan Snell
Deck Crew ..... Juanita Liñares, Trinity Wood
Wardrobe Crew ..... Phoebe Antonio, Emma Brown
Scenic Paint Crew ..... Vivian Nuño
Props Crew ..... Evelyn Betancourt, Lupe Liñares
Electrics Crew ..... Leila Muñoz, Ryan Dahl
Scene Shop Crew ..... Dylan Frederick, Connor Rice
Costume Shop Crew ..... Janice Sim, Maddy Diaz,
..... River Myaskovsky, Karla Vences
House Manager ..... Diego Barera
Box Office ..... Sebastian Elkin
Department Publicist ..... Chelsea Sutton



Dramaturgical Note

Karen Zacarías was just 10 years old when she immigrated with her family from Mexico City to Boston, where she was immediately met with bullying for aspects of her identity like her accent and the embroidered Mexican shirts she wore with pride. Decades later, Zacarías reflects on her childhood and the stories of fellow immigrants through her stage adaptation of Luis Alberto Urrea's novel, *Into the Beautiful North* (ITBN). This fun and fantastical production follows a high-speed adventure full of laughs and surprises, while acknowledging many of the issues in our current world around the border in a meaningful way.

The story follows Nayeli, a fearless friend and natural leader, along with her best friends, Tacho and Vampi. One day, while Nayeli is working with Tacho in his internet café, La Mano Caida, they are threatened and robbed by a corrupt cop and his narco-trafficker partner. Realizing that her hometown of Tres Camarones has become the Wild West, and that there are no longer men in the town to help defend against bandidos, Nayeli turns to a classic Western for her solution, *The Magnificent Seven* (1960). This film, which takes inspiration from Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*, follows the story of villagers heading across the border from Mexico into the U.S. to find seven gunmen that can defend their town from bandits. Searching for a solution to her town's problems, Nayeli relates to the classic film when she first sees it, inspiring her to set out on her own journey to the U.S. on a mission to find a new group of seven powerful men to help guard the town she loves.

Comparing Nayeli journey to that of the film's characters, it's clear that crossing the border has become a more difficult challenge. Though her situation is riddled with obstacles, this does not stop Nayeli from following her goal and staying on her thrill-packed ride, no matter the ups and downs along the way. While Nayeli has exciting adventures and meets many interesting new friends, she still faces real issues along the way that many immigrants face. The team is often a victim of corruption by authorities in both Mexico and the USA. Sadly, their fictional stories are based on real lived experience. For instance, in the year 2021, the Kino Border Initiative received 1,568 reports of abuse by U.S. Border Patrol authorities, meaning a staggering one in every five immigrants reported abuse, not including those who didn't even feel safe enough to report it.

While the troubles of an unjust immigration system continue to affect our daily lives, this production highlights the beauty of being able to never look back, no matter who tells you that you can't keep going. Through her journey, Nayeli shows that with confidence and the strength of standing with those she loves, she can fight for what she believes in and find her own version of success. So, come explore identity, empowerment, and resistance by following her and crew on their journey *Into the Beautiful North*!

--Dylan Vidal Frederick, Dramaturg

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Elianna Arredondo (Angel/Ensemble) is currently a third year Chemical Engineering major and Theatre minor at Cal Poly Pomona. This is her first production at CPP, she has also appeared in her high school's productions of *A Chorus Line* and *Mamma Mia*.

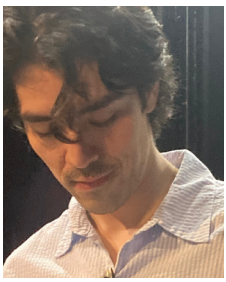
Ellis Buongiorno (Props Designer) is a fourth year Theatre Major with an emphasis on tech and design. At CPP he has served as Assistant Stage Manager for *The Paper Dreams Of Harry Chin* and *Anon(ymous)*.

Madison Diaz (Stage Manager) is a third year Theatre Major at Cal Poly Pomona. She has previously stage managed *Harbur Gate*, *Suessical*, *Cry it Out* and *Little Shop of Horrors* at CPP. She is incredibly excited to work with the theatre department once again!

Dylan Vidal Frederick (Dramaturg) is a third year Theatre Production & Design major at Cal Poly Pomona. This is his first time working on a production with the department. He's enjoyed his experience and is excited for what's to come next!



Antonieta Gutierrez (Araceli/Ensemble) is a third year Theatre Major with an emphasis in Acting at Cal Poly Pomona. At CPP, she has appeared in her first theater show third slot devising piece *Dream Quest* and now she's in her second show which is *Into The Beautiful North*.



Christopher Hernandez (Atomiko/Ensemble) is a History major with a love for theatre that has somehow managed to take up just as much of his time as his actual major, if not more. While he spends most of his academic life studying the past, he seems to have developed a habit of spending his free time pretending to be people who are very much not himself. You may have previously seen him playing Boss and Interrogator in *The Paper Dreams*

of Harry Chin, and you can now catch him taking on the roles of Atomiko and, of all people, Johnny Depp in *Into the Beautiful North*. When he isn't onstage, he's usually finding some other way to keep himself busy, which currently includes co-directing ACT's upcoming production of *Nerdy Prudes Must Die*, opening next semester. Between rehearsals, directing, and the occasional history paper, he's beginning to wonder what free time actually looks like. Nevertheless, he wouldn't have it any other way. He hopes you enjoy the show!

Katherin Jasso Montiel (Irma) who prefers to be called "Kat," is a passionate third-year student studying New Dance Theatre with a General Option at Cal Poly Pomona. She enjoys exploring the many creative possibilities within the performing arts and challenging herself through new experiences. Kat has a strong interest in acting, baking, costume design, and spending time with friends. She is currently working on three shows, allowing her to develop skills in different areas of her career. Through these experiences, Kat continues growing as an artist while expressing herself, collaborating with others, and discovering new ways to expand her creative mind.

Juanita Liñares (Deck Crew) is a third-year Theatre major at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, with an emphasis in Design and Technical Production. She has previously worked on *Anon(ymous)* as part of the props crew and served as Props Master for *The Miser*. She also worked as Assistant Stage Manager for *The Graveyard Shift*. Through her experience, Juanita continues to develop her skills and passion for theatre production and backstage work.



Jillian Litonjua (Vampi) is a first-year Business Major with an emphasis in Marketing at Cal Poly Pomona, hoping to minor in Theatre in the Spring. This being their first theatre production at CPP, they have done outside shows *like In the Heights* (Nina), *Heathers the Musical* (Pauline Fleming), and *Murder on the Runway* (Carol Anne Perkins). They have also served as Costume Head for *She Kills Monsters*. Love you mommy!

Mac (Officer Arnie/Ensemble) is a third-year Theatre major with an emphasis in Acting. This production marks his first performance at Cal Poly Pomona. A recent transfer from Saddleback College, he previously appeared in *Tiny Tim's Christmas Carol* as Bob Cratchit and the Gravedigger. Mac is also a veteran who served for 22 years.

River Myaskovsky (Don Pepe/Ensemble) is a fourth year Theatre Major with an emphasis in Acting at Cal Poly Pomona. They have previously appeared in *We Are Pussy Riot (or Everything is PR)*, *Anon(ymous)*, and The *Miser*. They also served on the electrics crew for *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord* and *Last, Best Small Town*. This is River's last show as CPP, and they feel very bittersweet about it.

Sam Ng (Scenic Designer) is a fourth year Theatre Major with an emphasis in Technical Design and Production at Cal Poly Pomona. At CPP, they served as Assistant Scenic on *We Are Pussy Riot (or Everything is PR)*, and lead Scenic Designer on *Anon(ymous)* and *The Paper Dreams of Harry Chin*.



David Olea (Garcia-Garcia/Ensemble) is a second year business major with an emphasis in Accounting here at Cal Poly Pomona, At CPP, he has appeared in *Little Shop of Horrors* last spring and has performed in a production of *Seussical the Musical* at Citrus College over the summer.



Connor Rice (Matt/Ensemble) is a Theatre Major with an emphasis in Acting at Cal Poly Pomona. His previous performances in the CPP Theatre Department include *Stupid F*cking Bird* (Dev) and *The Miser* (Valère). Beyond acting, he has also served the department as projection operator for *The Paper Dreams of Harry Chin*. He hopes you enjoy the show and is especially grateful to the rest of the cast and crew working to bring this story to life. He would also like to give a special thanks to his friends, teachers, and family that have given him unending support and strength throughout life.



Reizo Webber (Tacho) is a Cal Poly Pomona first-year making his college theater debut in tonight's play. He has, however, acted in many high school productions, playing characters such as Sky from *Mamma Mia*, Chip from *Beauty and the Beast*, Wayne from *Puffs*, and most recently, Orin from *Little Shop of Horrors* in the spring. Being in this play has been such a new experience for him, and he'd like to shout out everyone who worked on this play for being the most friendly and fun people to work with.

Malayah Wilford (Hair & Makeup Design) is a fourth year Theatre Major with an emphasis in Acting at Cal Poly Pomona. At CPP, she has appeared in *The Antigone Project*, *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord*, and *The Dream Quest*. She also served as a Hair & Make-up Designer on *The Graveyard Shift*, *Seussical* and *The Paper Dreams of Harry Chin* last spring. Wants to thank her friends and Family for supporting her through everything.



Karla Vences (Nayeli) is a second year Theatre in Education and Community Engagement Major at Cal Poly Pomona. At CPP, she has been Costume Shop Manager for *Seussical* and Assistant Costume Designer for *The Paper Dreams of Harry Chin*. She also played the role of Ensemble in a community production of *Alice By Heart* last summer.

Season Selection Committee Statement

The 2026-2027 season was selected through a collaborative process involving faculty and student voices. Guided by our educational mission, we sought plays that would challenge students through physical storytelling, heightened language, ensemble-based performance, and diverse theatrical forms. At the same time, we looked for works that engage urgent questions about the world we inhabit while making room for humor, hope, imagination, and joy.

Across this season, a common thread emerged: stories of people resisting forces that diminish their humanity. Whether confronting conformity, exploitation, isolation, displacement, or limited opportunity, the characters in these works search for belonging, dignity, and connection. Together, the season asks: How do we live with integrity in a fractured world? What does it cost to resist? And how might community, creativity, and joy help us imagine a better future?

We are excited to invite audiences into these conversations through *The Graveyard Shift*, *Into the Beautiful North*, *Rhinoceros*, *Mud,* our devised clown project, and our Student Written Plays production.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We at Cal Poly Pomona respectfully acknowledge the original caretakers of this land, the Tongva peoples, and all of their ancestors, elders, and descendants, past, present and emerging. We also recognize this land known as Los Angeles County today is also home to many Indigenous peoples from all over, and we are grateful for the opportunity to live and work here as guests on these lands, the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Tongva.

CPP DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE & NEW DANCE

UPCOMING EVENTS

2026-2027

DEC 3 @5:30PM

fourth annual
reworlding projects
a site specific performance experience
meet at dance studio 41-1A - FREE!

DEC 3 & 4 @7:30PM

class presentation
Cowning Workshop
studio theatre - FREE!

MARCH 12-21, 2027

production of
Rhinoceros
university theatre - $10-$15

APRIL 16-25, 2027

production of
Mud
studio theatre - $10-$15

APRIL 30 & MAY 1, 2027 @7:30PM

production of
Student/Faculty Dance Concert
university theatre - $10-$15

@CPPTHEATREDANCE

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE & NEW DANCE FACULTY AND STAFF

FULL TIME FACULTY
Sarah Krainin: Professor, Department Chair
Bernardo Solano: Professor
C. Julian White: Professor
Jesse Portillo: Associate Professor
Dr. Joshua Truett: Assistant Professor
Sayda G. Trujillo: Assistant Professor
Laura Epperson: Assistant Professor
Donzell Lewis: Assistant Professor

DEPARTMENT STAFF
Kenneth Blenc: Technical Director
Jonathan Bastow: Director of Theatre Facilities
Alyssa Martinez: Administrative Coordinator
Lexy Perez: Costume Shop Supervisor
Chelsea Sutton: Publicist

ADJUNCT LECTURERS
Talin Abadian • Jade Cagalawan • Doug Cooney • Jacquelyne Quinn Estrada
Zachary Groenewold • Jeremy Hahn • Michael Kachingwe • Harold Kast
Paulo Lima • Manny Macias • Paula Weston Solano
John Sylvain • Jake Wachtel

WELCOME TO THE CAL POLY POMONA DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE & NEW DANCE

About Us: The Cal Poly Pomona Department of Theatre and New Dance awards a Bachelor of Arts degree in theatre which emphasizes process and the practical experience of producing theatre. The Department follows the University's "learn by doing" philosophy by offering practice on Mainstage and Studio Theater productions, various workshops, and courses in all aspects of the theatre both artistic and academic. The program stresses concern for students as artists and individuals. Faculty and staff work closely with students to build a solid foundation of knowledge of both the practical and artistic aspects of theatre and dance. Students have the opportunity to participate as actors and dancers and fill leadership roles as designers or in areas of production.

Our Mission: The Department of Theatre and New Dance provides opportunities within a diverse and inclusive environment to explore and develop meaningful, innovative ideas that engage the interdependence of process and creation. Students develop critical thinking and disciplinary excellence through experiential learning, collaboration and interdisciplinary practices to prepare them to be current and relevant artists. Students work within established and experimental processes utilizing trends in new technologies, community and contemporary performance practices.

Give to the Department of Theatre & New Dance to support the next generation of storytellers!

bit.ly/CPPTheatreGive

@cpptheatredance | bit.ly/cpptheatre