



TOWN

SEPTEMBER 15-18, 2022

Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy

WRITTEN BY MICHAEL JOHN GARCÉS

DIRECTED BY NELL BANG-JENSEN



THEATRE
HORIZON

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Major support for TOWN has been provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage with additional support from PNC Arts Alive.

A LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR



TOWN, to me, embodies the possibility, risk, and reward of art-making in 2022. This play—made with and for the community it is a part of—is the heart of why I make theater.

I am the granddaughter of immigrants, and as such, have inherited a naive optimism of what America could be. My artistic practice is largely one fleeting attempt to bring us closer to that vision of America—one in which people come together across perceived boundaries, engage in deep listening, attempt to remedy harm, offer healing, seek reconciliation, watch each other's babies, break bread together, and perhaps, in that process, come closer to imagining what a more just and equitable future might look like.

Working on this play has brought us into coffee shops, graveyards, schools, homeless shelters, taquerias (a lot of taquerias), a toy factory, countless non-profits doing incredibly inspiring work, municipal buildings, a zoos, and so many people's homes. What you see onstage are the fictional results of the welcoming, open arms and the enthusiastic "yesses" that we received, as people vulnerably shared their dreams, regrets, hopes, and conflicts with us.

For me, as a Director in this lingering pandemic moment, these were the "yesses" I needed—the joyful confirmation of the vital part the arts play in bringing people together. I deeply believe that theaters, and all arts organizations, in order to fulfill this necessary and critical role, must recenter themselves in alignment with their communities.

In the first week of rehearsal, a somewhat skeptical 5-year-old in our cast, who wasn't quite sure what her Mom had signed her up for or what the point of it all was, came up to me in the middle of working on a scene. She asked: "So, does someone win?"

This moment has stuck with me. Typically in western drama, there is a hero and a villain, opposition and struggle, victory and defeat. In short, there is a winner, and there is a loser. And there is, to quote Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a "single story," in which complex human beings are reduced to a single narrative. This has led, of course, to many people feeling isolated from theater at large. Without representation, compassion, or equity, many Americans now feel like our plays and stages are not for them—that they have not been represented accurately, or fairly, or with compassion.

I want to make theater where we all win. I think *TOWN* is an attempt at that—at getting us closer to a vision of America that I want to be a part of. It has truly been the greatest joy and honor of my career to make and direct this piece. Welcome to *TOWN*, you are part of it now.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Nell Bang-Jensen". The signature is fluid and expressive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Director NELL BANG-JENSEN



Like any great romance...it started pretty casually, with a call from Nell Bang-Jensen asking me if I might be interested in talking about a project. That became a long conversation with her about why we make theatre, and how (if) it could possibly matter. And that became a longer conversation with everyone at Theatre Horizon about what it means—what it should mean, what we hope it means—to make theatre in this place at this time. And that became an even more involved—and inspiring—conversation with literally dozens of Norristonians from all walks of life, from preschoolers to seniors, who gave of their time, goodwill, and hospitality to a writer who is most definitely from out of town. This was—and is!—a conversation about the meaning of a place, of home, and, mostly, about community. What we have in common. How we find commonality across differences. How we can heal division—perhaps the most important conversations we can be having in 2022.

This play was created in collaboration with a wide and diverse array of amazing, hospitable, and generous individuals and organizations of Norristown through countless interviews, story circles, and readings. I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the joy, tears, perspectives, memories, and all the extraordinary stories that were shared as people expressed their commitment to Norristown, their passion for its history, and their vision of hope for its future.

If I learned nothing else, I learned that people who live here love this town. And I learned to love it too.

Playwright MICHAEL JOHN GARCÉS

TOWN

SEPTEMBER 15-18, 2022

DIRECTOR

NELL BANG-JENSEN

PLAYWRIGHT

MICHAEL JOHN GARCÉS

MUSIC DIRECTORS

SCOTT ZIEGLER & ELLE.MORRIS

ORIGINAL MUSIC

ILL DOOTS

COSTUME DESIGNER

LEIGH PARADISE

SCENIC AND PROPS DESIGNER

CHRIS HAIG⁺

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER

MAGGIE DAVIS*

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

CHANDALAE NYSWONGER*

SOUND DESIGNERS

ANTHONY MARTINEZ-BRIGGS & JORDAN MCCREE

MOVEMENT COACH

MELANIE COTTON

PRODUCING DIRECTOR

SHELBY NORTH

LIGHTING DESIGNER

KRISTA SMITH⁺

COMMUNITY COORDINATOR

MARISOL ROSA-SHAPIRO

DRAMATURG

GILBERTO VEGA

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

SARAH BRAUN



* Appearing through an Agreement between Theatre Horizon and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.
⁺ United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 of the IATSE is the union representing Scenic, Costume, Lighting, Sound and Projection Designers in Live Performance.

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Ava Boggi	Cassidy Gabrielle-Elise Peay
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PRODUCTION TEAM

DIRECTOR	NELL BANG-JENSEN
PLAYWRIGHT.....	MICHAEL JOHN GARCÉS
ORIGINAL MUSIC	ILL DOOTS
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PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER	MAGGIE DAVIS*
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*Appearing Through An Agreement Between
Theatre Horizon And Actors' Equity Association,
The Union Of Professional Actors And Stage
Managers In The United States.



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ENSEMBLE AND PRODUCTION BIOS

To read about the talented cast and production team, please scan the code or visit: www.theatrehorizon.org/town-bios

SPECIAL THANKS

Timothy Gallagher	Aleks Eigen	Susan Edgren	MontCo-Norristown	Angelique Hinton
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ArtsReach	HopeWorx		Monah Yancy	Caroline Heins

NORRISTOWN HISTORY

- 8000 BCE** Earliest traces of the Lenape people in what is now colonially known as New Jersey
- 1681** King Charles II repays debts he owed to William Penn's father by granting Penn stolen land
- 1682** Penn arrives in land caretaken by the Lenape people
- 1704** Isaac Norris, Sr. buys land from William Penn, Jr.
- 1812** Norristown is officially incorporated as the first Pennsylvania State Borough in Montgomery County
- 1912** Norristown celebrates its centennial
- 1930** The Norris Theatre opens
- 1940s** Pennsylvania Turnpike opens
- 1962** Norristown celebrates its sesquicentennial
- 1963** King of Prussia Mall opens
- 1989** Norristown Transportation Center opens
- 2012** Norristown celebrates its bicentennial
- 2012** Theatre Horizon renovates its new home at the former Bell Telephone building
-

September 2020

Theatre Horizon begins work on *TOWN* and interviews over 130 Norristown residents

September 15, 2022

Theatre Horizon presents the world premiere of *TOWN* at Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy



Community members celebrate Norristown's Centennial in 1912 (Top and Bottom Left) and Sesquicentennial in 1962 (Right)
Photo Credit: Historical Society of Montgomery County

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

TOWN was developed, rehearsed and performed across Norristown, which stands on the territory known as “Lenapehoking,” the ancestral home of the Lenape people.

For the past 10,000 years, the Lenape have been the original caretakers and stewards of Lenapehoking—one of numerous tribes that comprised tens of millions of people residing on this continent prior to the invasion of European colonizers.

We recognize that Isaac Norris, Sr.—Norristown’s namesake—purchased land from the family of William Penn even though nobody “owns” Lenapehoking. We acknowledge that Isaac Norris, Sr. was a slaveholder who benefited from a system that captured, sold, and enslaved over 10 million Africans who were trafficked to various locations in North America, South America, and the Caribbean.

We acknowledge the 6 million African Americans that moved from the American South to the Northeast during The Great Migration and their role in making places like Norristown a central hub for industry and retail. Finally, with a large Latinx population in Norristown—particularly people from Puerto Rico and Mexico—we acknowledge the past, present, and future legacies of the Taíno and Aztec peoples.

This land acknowledgement was written by Director of External Relations Gilberto Vega with advisement from Adam Waterbear DePaul and Barbara Bluejay Michalski of the Lenape Cultural Center.

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Best of luck with your season!

Edward A. Suarez, CPA, MBA



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Creating a Play About Norristown *Creando una obra acerca de Norristown*

Theatre Horizon has been developing this play over the span of two years.

Creating a new play requires collaboration between a dedicated creative team of theatre artists—including a director, playwright, composers, and designers—and community members like YOU.

Theatre Horizon ha estado desarrollando esta obra durante dos años.

Crear una nueva obra requiere colaboración de un equipo creativo del teatro que abarca un director, dramaturgo, compositor, y diseñadores ¡Además de miembros de la comunidad como TÚ!

STEP 1

(September 2020 - October 2021)

The project's creative team familiarize themselves with Norristown's notable places and people through:

- Tours and Site Visits
- One-on-one Interviews
- Group Story Circles

PASO 1

(septiembre de 2020 - octubre de 2021)

El equipo creativo del proyecto se familiariza con los lugares emblemáticos y personas destacadas de Norristown a través de:

- *Tours y visitas de los sitios*
- *Entrevistas individuales*
- *Círculos de historias grupales*

STEP 2

(October 2021 - January 2022)

Playwright Michael John Garcés compiles these stories to write a first draft of the script while the composers, ILL DOOTS, facilitate lyric-generation workshops at partner sites.

PASO 2

(octubre de 2021 - enero de 2022)

El dramaturgo Michael John Garcés recopila estas historias para escribir un primer borrador del guión, mientras que los compositores, ILL DOOTS, facilitan talleres de generación de letras en los lugares asociados.



A story circle with Norristown community members.
Un círculo de historias grupales con miembros de la comunidad de Norristown.



ILL DOOTS and community members at The TOWN Holla. Photos by John C. Hawthorne.
ILL DOOTS y miembros de la comunidad en The TOWN Holla. Fotos de John C. Hawthorne

STEP 3

(January 2022 - May 2022)

Our playwright shares the script-in-development with community members at public readings at partner sites around Norristown to gather feedback.

PASO 3

(enero de 2022 - mayo de 2022)

Nuestro dramaturgo comparte el guión en desarrollo con los miembros de la comunidad en lecturas públicas en lugares asociados alrededor de Norristown para recabar opiniones.

STEP 4

(May 2022 - June 2022)

To prepare community members for auditions, Theatre Horizon offers TOWN Tuesdays, a series of free theatre classes for adult learners at HopeWorx, Montgomery County Senior Adult Activities Center (MontCo SAAC), and Montgomery County-Norristown Public Library.

Theatre Horizon holds open try outs with more than 70 people from across Norristown auditioning.

The script and music are finalized.

PASO 4

(mayo 2022 - junio 2022)

Para preparar a los miembros de la comunidad para las audiciones, Theatre Horizon ofrece TOWN Tuesdays, una serie de clases de teatro gratuitas para estudiantes adultos en HopeWorx, el Centro de Actividades para Adultos Mayores del Condado de Montgomery (MontCo SAAC) y la Biblioteca Pública del Condado de Montgomery-Norristown.

Theatre Horizon celebra pruebas abiertas en las que participan más de 70 personas de todo Norristown.

El guion y la música están terminados.

STEP 5

(July 2022 - August 2022)

Community members and professional actors rehearse the show.

Designers on the creative team—including costumes, set, lighting, and sound—finalize the plans for the technical aspects of the project.

PASO 5

(julio 2022 - agosto 2022)

Los miembros de la comunidad y los actores profesionales ensayan el espectáculo.

Los diseñadores del equipo creativo -incluyendo el vestuario, la escenografía, la iluminación y el sonido- ultiman los planes para los aspectos técnicos del proyecto.

STEP 6

(September 2022)

Theatre Horizon presents the world premiere of TOWN at Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy.

PASO 6

(septiembre 2022)

Theatre Horizon presenta el estreno mundial de TOWN en la Eisenhower Academia de Liderazgo de Ciencia y Tecnología.



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Check our website or email Sheridan@TheatreHorizon.org for more information on upcoming clubs or getting one started at your school.



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