



PAYASITA

Originally conceived by Gretta Marston
Book, Lyrics, and Music by Gretta Marston & Daniel Cano
Directed by Matthew B. Cullen
Developed by mbc theatrical r&d

PAYASITA

PAYASITA is a bilingual musical clown piece about heartbreak, self-reconstruction, and the search for belonging.

Payasita arrives onstage with only a suitcase and a fragmented sense of who she is. With the audience's help, she retraces her past—where she came from, what she's lost, and what it might mean to begin again.



The Story

Run Time:
90 minutes

Payasita's journey begins the way many immigrants do:
with a suitcase and a dream of finding home.

She speaks only Spanish, but her "magical" microphone translates her thoughts into English. Eager to speak to the audience, she nevertheless can't remember much about where she came from, what her home looked like, or whether she has ever been in love. Something about arriving here—on this stage, in this country, in this body—has erased her past. But the past does not disappear; it returns in fragments, glitches, and hauntings, the way trauma often does.

As love songs and slapstick bits curdle into heartbreak, and memories of fleeing home seep into the performance, we begin to understand Payasita's inner landscape. PAYASITA is a musical about translation as survival, comedy as camouflage, and the cost of becoming "new."

It asks what we lose when we reinvent ourselves to be understood—and what, against all odds, we can still recover through voice, song, and telling the truth out loud.



Artist Statement

My name is Gretta Marston, and I grew up in Lima, Perú. My favorite ritual was going to the market with my dad: zigzagging the dirt road, buying Michael Jackson CDs, and drinking strawberry juice from plastic bags with straws. Then we'd come home and write songs on the guitar. This is the place I return to in my mind when I create. It is for my dad, and for that little girl with dirt on her shoes and music in her ears, that I do theater.

When I was fifteen, my mother and I immigrated to Boca Raton, Florida. I expected the "American high school" I'd grown up watching on TV—lockers, football captains, and a cheerleading squad of mean girls. But I soon realized I didn't quite fit into this American fantasy. The other girls didn't understand my accent, and I stopped speaking Spanish at home. I watched American films and repeated the dialogue out loud to polish my English, to sound right, to become legible to my friends at school. I did my best to erase my past. Thanks to mentors, my family's pride in who we are, and my country's undeniable cultural richness, I eventually found my way back home to myself.

I wrote PAYASITA to explore the way the so-called American Dream shapes the inner lives of immigrant women like my grandmother, my mother, and myself. This musical is for anyone who grew up speaking Spanish—or anyone who wishes they had. For anyone who had to start over, in a new country or as a new self. For anyone who fell in love, but fell the way you fall down a hill or off a building. For anyone who tried to find home in someone else, and failed—and especially for those who kept trying anyway.





Characters

- **PAYASITA:** Looking for home. Cannot speak English without the Magical Microphone.
- **PAQU:** A magical guide. In charge of when and how Payasita's memories happen. He embodies UNCLE SAM, MAN, and PAPÁ.
 - **UNCLE SAM:** In charge of welcoming people into the USA, and eventually, of changing them.
 - **MAN:** Wants Payasita to forget the past and look to the better and brighter future they can build together.
 - **PAPÁ:** Needs Payasita to do better than he did. Believes in Payasita's potential and future.



PAQU:
The
Ukuku

UNCLE
SAM

Paqu Characters' Masks



MAN:
The Half
Mask



PAPÁ:
Featureless
Mask



The Aesthetic of PAYASITA

HOW DO YOU BUILD A HOME?

Payasita arrives to the USA with nothing—not even her memories.



SHE BUILDS THE WRONG ONE.

An assimilated American home.



SHE **DESTROYS** IT.

What remains?



FRAGMENTS. RUINS. A BODY THAT REMEMBERS WHAT HER MIND CANNOT.



SHE BEGINS TO REMEMBER.



AND FROM THOSE MEMORIES, SHE BEGINS AGAIN.

CLOWN WORLD
Unhinged.
Playful.
Big. Messy.
Emotionally extreme.
Vulnerable.
Deeply human.



Listen to
PAYASITA's music
here!

Music

The musical language of Payasita reflects the **tension between memory, identity, and belonging** at the heart of her journey.

Payasita's Peruvian origin can be heard when she remembers: dreamlike textures, guitar and percussion, evoking the Peru she doesn't exactly recall but that still lives in her.

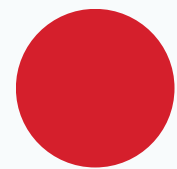
In contrast, we have a **sonic world that represents the America of today** and its modernity—a contrast that translates displacement, that feeling of not fully belonging anywhere, into music.

On top of that foundation, different genres coexist without settling into just one: a circus-toned moment, a festejo that brings Peru in as celebration and resistance, and ballads carrying the story's most intimate, breaking moments (falling in love, betrayal).

Paqu, as shaman-guide, moves through all these registers. **Paqu's sound is the thread that carries the piece from one sonic world to the next** without losing its unity.

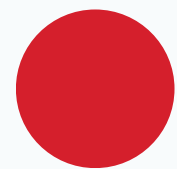


Development History



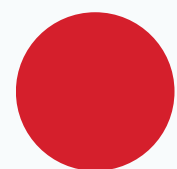
January 2026

A fifteen-minute fragment (Password: SUMMIT2026) was showcased as part of Yale's 'You Are The Creator' course in New Haven, CT.



June 2026

A second fifteen-minute fragment was presented at the Miranda Family Fellowship Summit in New York City.



Summer 2026

Residency with mbc theatrical r&d.

Gretta Marston is a Peruvian-American playwright, an MFA graduate from the David Geffen School of Drama at Yale University and a Miranda Family Fellow alumna. She grew up in a district of Lima, Perú founded by her grandparents, and today her writing honors her cultural heritage and linguistic diversity (Spanish & English). Gretta is committed to creating spaces of testimony and healing, inviting audiences into the rich interior lives of Latina and immigrant women.

Gretta Marston
(Book, Lyrics & Music /
PAYASITA)



Daniel Cano
(Book, Lyrics & Music /
PAQU)



Daniel Cano is a Peruvian actor, director, playwright, and educator, with a Bachelor’s in Performing Arts from PUCP. He trained at the Roberto Ángeles Actor Training School and under Alberto Ísola, and has worked with Yuyachkani. He has performed in over twenty productions, including Peter Pan, Muerte en el Pentagonito, and Tito Andrónico, and on TV in Luz de Luna, Los Otros Libertadores, and El Último Bastión. He starred in Compartespacios and directed Electra and El Efecto Proust.

**Our
Team**

Born in Bogotá, then adopted, Matthew is a theatre director and creative producer now based in East Harlem. The goal is to cultivate a community of administrators, artists, and audiences alike around a process focused practice. Broadway: Buena Vista Social Club. Off Broadway: Playwrights Horizons, Vineyard Theatre, En Garde Arts, Repertorio Español, 59e59. They are a Lin-Manuel Miranda Family Fellow, the Executive Producer of mbc theatrical r&d, and an associate member with SDC. matthewbcullen.com.



Matthew B. Cullen
(Director)



Lula Britos
(Associate Director)

Lula Britos is a theatre director, producer, educator, and writer from Buenos Aires, Argentina. She has directed for La Jolla Playhouse’s WOW Festival and MOXIE Theatre. She has assisted on productions at La Jolla Playhouse and UC San Diego, including Jaja’s African Hair Braiding, Vinegar Tom, and blu. She holds a BA in Theatre Arts with a minor in Dance from UC San Diego and has trained at the National Theater Institute and the Kennedy Center. lulabritos.com

Designers



**Karen Loewy
Movilla
(Scenic
Designer)**

Karen Loewy Movilla is a Colombian multi-hyphenated artist and set designer. She received her bachelor's degree in Film and T.V. from Boston University and is graduating with an M.F.A from David Geffen School of Drama at Yale.

Her recent design credit include Spunk (Yale Repertory Theatre), Macbeth (DGSD), Kilele (DGSD), Aya Ogawa's Meat Suit (Mercury Lounge), Nani (Yale Cabaret), Twink Death (Yale Cabaret), New England Summer Storms (Columbia University), Our Bodies like Dams (Mabou Mines, The Brick), and The Night Alive (Chain Theatre). Select film credits: August at Twenty-Two (dir. Sophia Castuera), And Along Came Lily (dir. Danielle Hope Diamond).



**Rodri
Hernandez
Martinez
(Costume
Designer)**

Rodri Hernandez Martinez is an incredibly hot and beautiful scenographer and artist from Cancun and Mexico City based in New York City working in different mediums including performance art, theatre, opera, and dance using design elements as dramaturgy. They are passionate about projects that display the nuances of systems like immigration, gender and race with a sense of mischief, subversion, and other fancy words. M.F.A. in Design for Stage and Film from NYU Tisch.



**Salvador
"Suavecito"
Zamora
(Sound
Designer)**

Salvador "Suavecito" Zamora is a sound designer, composer, producer, and dancer. He's passionate about his border town communities, Latinx culture, and the connection between sound and movement. Credits include, Off-Broadway: Indian Princesses (Atlantic Theatre Co.), The Fires (Soho Rep). Off-Off-Broadway: Camping, The Surgeon and Her Daughters (Colt Coeur), Bunny Bunny (The Invisible Dog). 2023 recipient of the Princess Grace Award. MFA University of California, San Diego '23. Colt Coeur Company Member. @suavecito_sounddesign www.suavecito.design

Next Steps

- Sep. '26: Begin Design Ideation
- Nov. '26: In-Person Development
- Jan. '27: Week-Long Workshop



Want to support PAYASITA's journey?

Please email us at
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grettamarston28@gmail.com

We'd love to chat with you!





Thank you!