

### Notes from the Playing Possum Director & Playwright

Playing Possum is a story that honors the uniqueness of each individual. It makes us realize that every single aspect of us is a gift not only for ourselves but for the world. Taking place in the Mexican-American desert millions of years ago before humans existed, Playing Possum is the perfect storm to celebrate the duality of Mexican and American cultures which, since the beginning of time, have been intertwined more than we think.

This is why I'm immensely honored to have been assigned to the task of telling this beautiful story. Thank you very much to RSPC for giving me this opportunity, to Holly Hepp-Galvan for trusting me with her work, and the cast and crew of Playing Possum for sharing all their work and talent!

~ Anel

*Playing Possum* was inspired by my father-in-law whose Mexican mother told him many folktales. Going on to become a professor of Spanish, he always shared how he wished more people knew of the charming trickster, Possum, who was such a part of his childhood. I fell in love with these stories and even told them to my own daughter growing up! Now at 98, my father-in-law was thrilled to hear that these stories would be coming to life in New York City. Thank you Dr. Roberto Galván for sharing these important tales and thanks to Rising Sun Performance Company for allowing new audiences to appreciate them. Thanks!

~ Holly

**Land Acknowledgement** We would like to begin by acknowledging the Indigenous Peoples of all the lands that we are on today. While we gather today, we would like to take a moment to acknowledge the importance of the land, which we each call home. We do this to reaffirm our commitment and responsibility in improving relationships between nations and to improve our own understanding of local Indigenous peoples and their cultures. From coast to coast, we acknowledge the ancestral and unceded territory of all the First Nations people that call this nation home. Please join us in a moment of reflection to acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past and to consider how we are and can each, in our own way, try to move forward in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration and undoing of harm. We encourage you to do your own research about the communities that are indigenous to the stolen land that you are on: <https://native-land.ca>

**RSPC Staff:**

Founding Artistic Director	Akia Squitieri
Associate Artistic Director	Anna Hogan
New Media & Marketing Manager	Rachael Langton
Literary Manager	Rick Benson
Environmental Sustainability Director	William Serri
Social Media Manager	Jennifer Iris Rivera
Legal Counsel	Traci Marquis
Emeritus Executive Director/Co-Founder	David Anthony

**The RSPC Ensemble:** Akia Squitieri, Andrew Gonzalez, Anna Hogan, Anel Carmona, Antonio Miniño, Ashleigh Herndon, Ayesha Salah, Ashleen Rowan, Bailey Bass, Becky Saunders, Chelsey Smith, Chris Jumper, Chris Goodrich, Crystal Edn, Corianne Stein, Danielle Bee Smotrich, David Stallngs, Desiree Pinol, Donna Latham, Deanna Alexandra, Eric Parness, Federica Borlenghi, , Ita Korenzecher, Jackie McKenna, Jennifer Atkinson, Jennifer Iris Rivera, Joan Kane, Josephine Pizzino, , Julia Geromin, Justin Hsu, Laura Lamberti , Kassime Fofana, Kendra Christel, Kevin Eubanks Jr, Kevin Rabbits, Leka Makenzie, Lluvia Almanza, Luana Seu, Luna G. Reiley, Maya Jasmin Kurokouchi, Mateo Moreno, Michael Hagins, Maera Daniel Hagage, Maggie Kissinger, Mary Sheridan, Michael Pichardo, Nadia Duncan, Nathan Siever, Nicole Harley, Orlando F. Rodriguez, Rachael Langton, Rebecca Kane, Samuel Neagley, Samantha Simone, Stephanie Barney, Raiane Cantisano, Rick Benson, Sara Dove, Sean Phillips, Susan Goodell, Sven Trygve Haabeth, Valerie David, William Serri & Yashebadar Roker

**Resident Playwrights:** Judd Lear Silverman, Donna Latham, Molly Kirschner, Kati Frazier, Inna Tsyrlin, Eva Meilng Pollitt, Susan Goodell

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Fractured Atlas, Horse Trade Theater Group, Alliance of Resident Artists, David Anthony Photography, N-K Photography, Trust for Governors Island, The LIT Fund, Creative Solutions, LLC, Material for the Arts, NYC Dept. of Cultural Affairs, Molloy College and our AMAZING 2020 individual donors : Anne Schellekens, Jill Miersch, Maera Hagage, Wendy Payne, Regina & John Richards, Maureen Serri, Rebecca Saunders, Michael Pichardo, Joan Kane, Cecilia Benson, Linda Dowling, Toby Latham, Gregory Harden, & Nicole Garick. A Special Thanks to our Patreon Donors: Elizabeth Burke, Michelle Schellekens, Leo Blais, Jamie Weisberg & Richard Damaso, Judd Silverman, Emmy Tomes

**We are proud members of The League of Independent Theatres, Fractured Atlas and Alliance of Resident Theatres/NY. DONATE TODAY**

*Rising Sun Performance Company is a sponsored project of Fractured Atlas, a non-profit arts service organization. Contributions for the charitable purposes of Rising Sun Performance Company must be made payable to Fractured Atlas only and are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:**  
<http://www.risingsunnyc.com/support-us>

**PLAYING POSSUM**

By Holly Hepp-Galván  
 Directed by Anel Carmona^  
 Assistant Director Chelsey Smith^

The Cast

Rachael Langton^	Possum, Snake
Rick Benson^	Possum, Snake
Lluvia Almanza^	Turtle
Mateo Moreno^	Coyote
Orlando F. Rodriguez^	Coyote
Ayesha Saleh^	Snake, Possum
Rachel Schardt	Turtle
Mary Sheridan^	Rabbit
Danielle Stanek	Snake, Turtle
Denisse Estefany Mendoza	Rabbit

**REPORT BACK TO SPACE**

By Judd Lear Silverman ^  
 Directed by Chelsey Smith^  
 Featuring: Luis Feliciano & Rachel Shardt

Artistic & Production Team	
Stage Manager	Madeleine Blossom
Assistant Stage Manager	Fatemata Krubally
Costume Design	Catherine Fisher

^ Denotes Ensemble Member of Rising Sun Performance Company

**Our Mission:**  
 Committed to the principle of ensemble process and performance through the collaboration of a company of actors, directors and playwrights, Rising Sun Performance Company’s mission is to advance the vitality and diversity of American theater by nurturing artists, encouraging repeatable creative relationships, and contributing new works and revitalized pre-existing work to the national canon. Rising Sun Performance Company realizes this goal by providing a safe artistic home which stimulates risk-taking without limits of genre or agenda. Learn more at [www.risingsunnyc.com](http://www.risingsunnyc.com) @RisingSunNYC

A special thanks to the New York City Parks Department & Staff

# ABOUT US

**Ayesha Saleh (Snake, Possum)** Ayesha Saleh is a born and raised New Yorker and theatre and film actress, excited to venture out to her first show since the pandemic. She's a member of Rising Sun, who was also involved in the lovely Golden Dove, another show created for our compassionate and creative youth!

**Danielle Stanek (Snake, Turtle)** Danielle Stanek is a 2020 graduate of Kent State University with a BFA in Musical Theatre. While 2020 shut down theater in-person, she was excited and grateful to perform professionally in numerous online shows during the pandemic, including two with Metropolitan Playhouse (*Woman's Honor* and *The Magical City*). Check out her website, [www.daniellestanek.com](http://www.daniellestanek.com) to get to know her better!

**Denisse Estefany Mendoza (Rabbit)** Denisse Estefany Mendoza is a New York-based bilingual actor. She is a recurring performer for the improvised show "Chemical X" with Sour Grapes Productions. Theatre credits include "Noises Off" in The Vino Theater, "Frienemies" at the Players Theater, and "Niños Show Up!" at the Kraine Theater, the Spanish adaptation of the critically-acclaimed kids show, "Show Up, Kids!" Film credits include "Seams" directed by Sierra Nutkevitch, "Uncommon Application" by Stella Wunder, and "Don't Speak Now" directed by Michelle D'Angelo.

**Lluvia Almanza (Turtle)** Actor/director. Lluvia is a Rising Sun Performance Company ensemble member and received her BFA from the University of Texas at El Paso. Her short film "For You" premiered at the El Paso Classic Film Festival. Her off-off-Broadway debut was at Theatre 315 in 2013, in "Twelve Angry Jurors" directed by Rich Swingle and Patricia Mauceri. On TV, she's appeared on Discovery ID.

**Mary Sheridan (Rabbit)** MARY SHERIDAN is thrilled to be an Ensemble Member of Rising Sun Performance Company. She is the recipient of the 2016 Best Featured Actress Award for the Planet Connections Theatre Festivity. Her favorite NYC theatres to work at include: New Perspectives, The Culture Project, Urban Stages, New York Theatre Workshop & Theatre Row. Her favorite roles include: Maxine in "Tongue of a Bird", Alma in "Summer and Smoke", Savage in "Savage in Limbo", Ophelia in "Hamlet" & Ann in "All My Sons". Mary has done several short films with J. Boyett ([www.jboyett.net](http://www.jboyett.net)), is currently working on a cabaret show & is a Yale University graduate. [www.marysheridan.net](http://www.marysheridan.net)

**Mateo Moreno (Coyote)** Mateo Moreno is an actor/playwright and a proud ensemble member of Rising Sun and is very excited to be back to performing live! Recent credits: Moonwalker (Reset 2021), 'Art' (Strollers), The Rite-ing on the Wall (RS), Krampus Search 2020 (RS), MetalBird, For the Love of Lina, Not-Knowing (3LD). Recent playwriting credits include: Within Our Walls (workshop - Rising Sun), Pitch (Reset 2020 - Published & available via Amazon), No Hablo Español: MixTape of a MexiCan't (NY Fringe). He also reviews films via TheArtsWire Weekly & is grateful for you. [www.Mateo-Moreno.com](http://www.Mateo-Moreno.com), [www.TheArtsWireWeekly.com](http://www.TheArtsWireWeekly.com)

**Orlando F. Rodriguez (Coyote)** Orlando F. Rodriguez (Oscar) is a graduate from the University of Texas at El Paso, and has a degree in Theater Tech and Design. He is currently living in NYC to further pursue his career. He would love to thank his wife, Lluvia, and fur baby, Voldemort, for all the support and encouragement. Credits include (Theater:) Voice 1 in Betty's Summer Vacation, Greta in Bent, Barrosa in a staged reading of Itzel the Pirate Queen (Film:) Ben in Cleo y Los Cabrones, Jimmy in Exponential, King Ralphy in Placed, (Directing:) Dead Awake, The Fall of Wallace Winter, A Marriage Proposal (Playwright:) Angustias (Anguish), The Armando Project, Dead Awake, Dolores.

**Rachael Langton (Possum)** Rachael Langton is a New York based director, producer and performer, and serves as the Marketing and Digital Media Manager at Rising Sun Performance Company. Previous Rising Sun virtual theater credits include *City of Dark*, *Scrooge*, and *Hallow-Stream*. Other Virtual credits include director of *Woman's Honor* and *East Village Trader Joe's* at Metropolitan Virtual Playhouse. Select New York directing credits include *Graduation* by Eugene Grygo, performed in the International Human Rights Festival, *Fable from An Unstable Table* by Susan Goodell, performed at The Rising Sun Performance Company, and *a/in/the/of*, which won the 2018 Sugartown Shorts Festival of 10-minute plays. Rachael is also the Digital Marketing Associate at Classic Stage Company. Education: BA Theatre Studies, Ithaca College. View her work at [RachaelLangton.com](http://RachaelLangton.com). Follow @Rachael\_Langton.

**Rachel Schardt (Turtle)** Rachel is an actress and all around creative who has appeared in various commercials, tv shows, films, and theatre productions across the country. After growing up in Texas, she received her BFA in Acting from Ithaca College. She now lives in NYC with her two cats, Cashew & Rufus. When Rachel isn't performing, she designs websites for other creatives and small businesses!

**Rick Benson (Possum, Snake)** Rick is a performer for Rising Sun and Literary Manager. He has performed the roles of Cyrano de Bergerac, Alceste in Moliere's *The Misanthrope*, and the Old Man in Ionesco's *The Chairs*. He has done Young Audience Theater for The Secret Theatre in Long Island City, Queens.

## THE CREATIVE & PRODUCTION TEAM

**Holly Hepp-Galván (Playwright)** Holly Hepp-Galván lives in New York City where she was recently named a runner-up in the 2021 Jackie White National Memorial Playwriting Contest and was a 2019 NYSCA/NYFA Fellow in Playwriting/Screenwriting. Holly's plays have been presented at or developed with Project Y Theatre Company, New Perspectives Theatre Company, Core Artist Ensemble, New Circle Theatre Company, The Bechdel Group, Wide-Eyed Productions, The New York International Fringe Festival, 52nd Street Project, and more. She is Playwright-in-Residence for Voices Inside/Out, a playwriting program for incarcerated individuals and also currently serves on the faculty of Baruch College and Fordham University where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Journalism, Playwriting, Creative Dramatics, and Theatre for Youth.

**JUDD LEAR SILVERMAN (playwright)** spent many years at Henry Street Settlement's Abrons Arts Center, teaching playwriting, coordinating the Urban Youth Theater, and producing/directing productions for children and teens. He ran an afterschool program at the Harlem Children's Zone, another for a Manhattan middle school, and counseled students and coordinated productions for Brooklyn College's Theater Department, prior to which he worked for numerous stage and film producers, directors, and agents. Recipient of a Berrilla Kerr Foundation playwriting grant, he is published by Samuel French, Stage It!, and Best American Short Plays among others. Recently, his work was seen virtually via Rising Sun, Michigan's Bay City Players, Florida's Phoenix Tears Productions, and soon Massachusetts' Jakespeare VTC. He teaches playwriting, drama lit, and composition at Pace University.

**Anel Carmona (Director)** thrilled to direct *Playing Possum!* She is a Multidisciplinary Theatre Artist and Educator. Originally from Mexico and based in New York City, Anel has taken part in dozens of productions throughout North America. Among her favorite credits rank: "Adios Fjord" (Off-Broadway, Theater at Gibney), "Ice Cream Fro-Yo" (Hudson Guild Theater), "The Church of the Winter" (Gene Frankel Theatre), and "Chocolate en la Estación" (Teatro Jaime Torres Bodet). In 2020 her COVID-19 themed play "A Seis Pies de Distancia" had video production in Tabasco, Mexico and Alberta, Canada. It was also featured in the published anthology "De Pandamia a Pandemonium" in the Mexican Platform "Dramaturgia Mexicana." Anel holds an MFA in Playwriting from The Actors Studio Drama School at Pace University; she is also an active member of the Playwrights and Directors Workshop at the Actors Studio and the Dramatist Guild of America.

**Chelsey Smith (Director)** Chelsey Smith is a queer, female, stage director and theater maker. Her most recent works include *F\*\*\*k'd Up Fairytales* by Michael Hagins, *Quarrel a la Quarantina* by Logann Grayce, and "Here and Us" by Ian August. Two of her recent works: "Same" by Logann Grayce and "172 Push-Ups" by Scott Mullen are now published and she is listed as the original director for both productions. She also directed a selection from *Spike Heels* by Theresa Rebeck as part of a directing showcase at The Drama League. She is particularly proud of "Something by Tolstoi," which she co-created and developed over the course of a year and had sold out runs each night. She also directed the premiere productions of "The Social Drama Play Play" by Ivan Faute and "Conversion" & "Make Believe" by Erica Magrin. She has an affinity for dark humor with a touch of the absurd and loathes capitalism, willful ignorance, and the patriarchy. She is also quite good at solving three dimensional puzzles. [chelseysmithnyc.com](http://chelseysmithnyc.com)

**Madeleine Blossom (Stage Manager)** Madeleine Blossom is a New York City-based Actor and Stage Manager with credits ranging from new plays, touring shows, Shakespeare, 29-Hour Equity Readings, workshops and more. Right after graduating from Drew University in 2018, Madeleine jumped into the theatre world and has yet to look back. From South Coast Repertory in California to The Tank Theatre in NYC, some of Madeleine's favorite productions to work on have been "Heathers," "Sweeney Todd," "The Velveteen Rabbit," and "The Performance." Whether behind the table, under the stage lights, or outside in a park, Madeleine finds herself happiest when creating theatre!

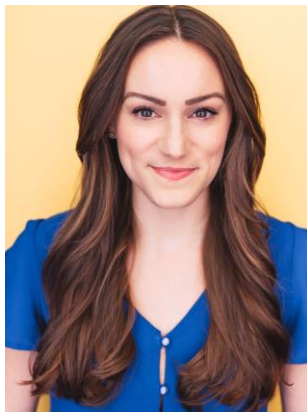
**Fatemata Krubally (Assistant Stage Manager)** Fatemata Krubally B.A. '21 since graduating from high school has stage-managed various sharings at the Lehman College black box theatre. She has over 5+ years of people-oriented work experience including theatre ushering and apprentice painting. Her love of theatre began in middle school and is forever growing.

**Catherine Fisher (Costume Design)** CATHERINE FISHER designs for theater, dance, film, and television, is a member of the Lincoln Center Director's Lab, a New York State Counsel for the Arts Individual Awards recipient, and has been recognized in several Festival productions and Independent film. Recent and pre-pandemic shows include *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *Little Shop of Horrors* (costumes and puppets), "Frank Mills" - Music video. Catherine is also a founding member of Honest Accomplice Theatre.

**Akia Squitieri** (Founding Artistic Director) is an award-winning Producer, Director, and Arts Administrator. She is the Founding Artistic Director of Rising Sun Performance Company and Co-Executive Director for the Innovative Theatre Foundation, where she has also served as Company Manager, and on the honorary awards committees and as an at-large judge. She served as the Company Manager for the international sensation, *Blue Man Group* at the Astor Place Theater for 10 years. Akia has received critical praise for her direction of multiple productions including "Hellcab", "Goodnight Lovin' Trail", "The Last Supper", "Crapshoot", "Bug", "The Glory of Living" & "Elephant". Past notable credits include working on staff at Horse Trade Theatre Group, serving as General Manager for FRIGID New York's inaugural year, and returning in multiple positions for each subsequent year; as Production Coordinator for nationally acclaimed Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, overseeing the playwrights' unit and INSIGHT 13 production series and on the Advisory board of the Paul Butterfield Fund & Society. She has been on staff at Dance Entropy, Form Theatricals, The Book of Merman, The Play Company and Drunk Shakespeare. She is a recipient of the New York Innovative Theatre Awards "Founders Award" for her contributions to the organization and Off-Off Broadway Community and Two Time "Congeniality" and "Outstanding Director" Award Winner from the Planet Connections Theatre Festival. She is an anti-sexual harassment advocate and the founder of "creating safe spaces"- the first theatrical based anti-harassment training program in the US. She is also a co-founder of the NYC Theatre Standards which will be launching in 2021. Alumni of Commercial Theatre Institute and Directors Lab North. Member of the League of Professional Theatre Women, and The League of Independent Theatre. When not absorbed in theatre, she is an avid traveler and scuba diver. You can learn more about her work here at [www.akiasquitieri.com](http://www.akiasquitieri.com) and [www.risingsunnyc.com](http://www.risingsunnyc.com) @AkiaSquitieri



**Ayesha Saleh**



**Danielle Stanek**



**Orlando F. Rodriguez**



**Rachael Langton**



**Denisse Estefany Mendoza**



**Lluvia Almanza**



**Rachel Schardt**



**Rick Benson**



**Mary Sheridan**



**Mateo Moreno**



**Holly Hepp-Galván**



**Anel Carmona**

# Join Us for Our Next Performances

## Summer Tour Performance Schedule

Two Performances each day at Noon & 3 PM

July 18 - Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx NY

July 24 - Hunters Point Park, Long Island City Queens

July 31 - Fort Greene Park, Brooklyn NY

August 14<sup>th</sup> - Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx, NY

August 15 - Summit Rock, Central Park, Manhattan

Join us for our Two-Day Festival on Governors Island!

August 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>

Additional Dates & Titles to be added



**Chelsey Smith**



**Madeleine Blossom**



**Fatemata Krubally**



**Catherine Fisher**



**Judd Lear Silverman**