

Experience L.A.

Water by the Spoonful

by Quiara Alegría Hudes

Thursday, February 15, 2018

Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles

KNOW BEFORE THE SHOW

- *Water by the Spoonful* was written by Quiara Alegría Hudes.
- The play premiered off-Broadway in 2012 and won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama that year.
- Hudes was born in Philadelphia, where *Water by the Spoonful* is set, to a Jewish father and a Puerto Rican mother. Since her stepfather was Puerto Rican, she has said that she was “raised by two Puerto Rican parents . . . but I look white.”
- Hudes wrote the book for the award-winning musical *In the Heights* and for Lin Manuel-Miranda’s forthcoming animated film *Vivo*.
- The play is underscored by several John Coltrane compositions.

THE ELLIOT TRILOGY

Water by the Spoonful is part two of a trilogy that began with *Elliot, A Soldier’s Fugue* and ends with *The Happiest Song Plays Last*. The trilogy is named for the playwright’s cousin Elliot, an Iraq War veteran. Productions of all three plays are currently running in Los Angeles at the Mark Taper Forum, Kirk Douglas Theatre, and LATC.

Quiara Alegría Hudes actively draws from the lived experiences of her family, even interviewing family members as part of her writing process, but her plays are ultimately fictional, with changed names and story lines. She told the *New York Times* that her relatives “really get that I’ve made a fictional story and character out of an emotional truth that they’ve expressed to me.”

THE ETHICS OF WRITING FROM LIFE

Quiara Alegría Hudes writes plays about things her family has really experienced. She believes this requires a highly ethical approach, including sending drafts of her scripts to anyone she has interviewed for them, and being willing to cancel a production because a family

Quiara Alegría Hudes’s mother “sat her down and told her . . . that she had a duty to tell the stories of the people in her family, many of them struggling with poverty and addiction”
(*New York Times*)

member is uncomfortable with it. When she received her \$10,000 Pulitzer award for *Water by the Spoonful*, Hudes shared it with two cousins whose stories had inspired characters in the play.

CENTER THEATRE GROUP

The nonprofit Center Theatre Group is one of the largest theatre companies in the United States, offering year-round programming at the Mark Taper Forum, the Ahmanson Theatre, and the Kirk Douglas Theatre. The company has been producing theatre for more than 50 years, and regularly programs award-winning revivals as well as world premieres. More than 750,000 people attend CTG shows each year.

MARK TAPER FORUM

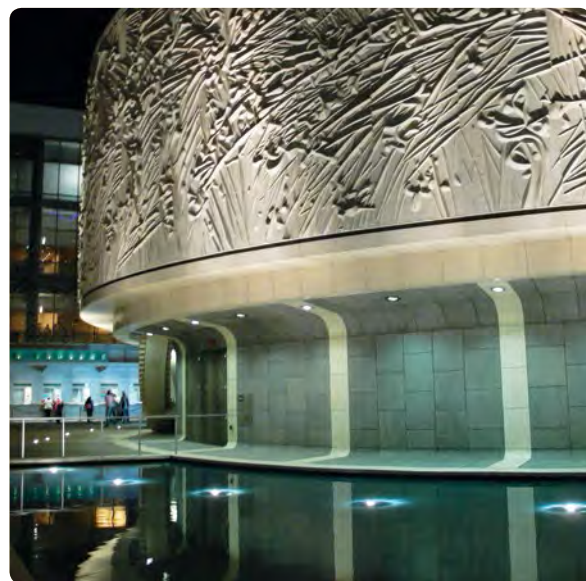
The Mark Taper Forum is known for presenting new and innovative plays in an atmosphere more intimate than that of its Music Center neighbors, the Ahmanson Theatre and the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. The Music Center was designed in the late 1960s by Welton Becket, whose firm created many iconic L.A. buildings, including the Capitol Records Building, the Beverly Hilton Hotel, and the Carousel of Progress at Disneyland, which looks a bit like the Mark Taper Forum. The Taper, named for real-estate developer Mark Taper, underwent a major renovation in 2007, which retained its signature circular shape but significantly updated the interior. The 739-seat theatre features a thrust stage, which extends into the audience on three sides.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Hudes's plays are known for their empathy and emotional honesty. How did it feel to watch this play?
- What do you think is an ethical way to approach writing about other people's life experiences?
- Theatre critic Charles Isherwood described *Water by the Spoonful* as a "moving collage of lives in crisis." Can you identify elements of the play's form that make it collage-like?
- The play explores both online relationships among people from different walks of life and family relationships. Do you think these are fundamentally different kinds of relationships? Are there any universal qualities inherent to all human relationships?
- Why do you think the play is underscored by the music of John Coltrane?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MAY WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- Other plays at the Mark Taper Forum
centertheatregroup.org/visit/mark-taper-forum
- Sojourn Theatre at USC, Friday, April 20
visionsandvoices.usc.edu/events/listing.php?event_id=966382
- The Provost's Series on Wicked Problems
provost.usc.edu/initiatives/wicked-problems



Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles



Photo: Craig Schwartz

Luna Lauren Vélez in the Center Theatre Group production of *Water by the Spoonful* at the Mark Taper Forum. Directed by Lileana Blain-Cruz.

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

RASCHELLE NAGAR of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about tonight's play and the playwright. Those with a call number are physical items which you can find in our campus libraries. Those without a call number (e.g., databases, journals, and journal articles) are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

QUIARA ALEGRÍA HUDES' ELLIOT TRILOGY

- ◉ Hudes, Quiara Alegría. *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue*. New York: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 2007.
Doheny Memorial Library: PS3608.U43 E55 2007
- ◉ Hudes, Quiara Alegría. *Water by the Spoonful*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2012.
Doheny Memorial Library: PS3608.U3234 W38 2012
Doheny Memorial Library: PS3608.U3234 W38 2017
- ◉ Hudes, Quiara Alegría. *The Happiest Song Plays Last*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2014.
Doheny Memorial Library: PS3608.U3234 H37 2014

ABOUT QUIARA ALEGRÍA HUDES

- ◉ Garcia-Romero, Anne. "Fugue, Hip Hop and Soap Opera: Transcultural Connections and Theatrical Experimentation in Twenty-First Century US Latina Playwriting." *Latin American Theatre Review* 43, no. 1 (2009): 87-102.
Database: Latin American Theatre Review Website
- ◉ Gardley, Marcus. "Music Is Her Muse: Quiara Alegria Hudes and Her Path to the Pulitzer." *The Brooklyn Rail*, 2012, 109.
Database: The Brooklyn Rail Website
- ◉ Huerta, Jorge. "From the Margins to the Mainstream: Latino/a Theater in the U.S." *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature* 32: no. 2 (2008): 1-22.
Database: Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature Website
- ◉ Ybarra, Patricia. "How to Read a Latinx Play in the Twenty-first Century: Learning from Quiara Hudes." *Theatre Topics* 27, no. 1 (2017): 49-59.
Database: ProjectMUSE
- ◉ Young, Harvey. "An Interview with Quiara Alegría Hudes." *Theatre Survey* 56, no. 2 (2015): 187-194.
Database: Cambridge University Press

RECOMMENDED JOURNALS

American Theater

The Dramatist

Latin American Theatre Review

Modern Drama



Quiara Alegría Hudes



Peter Mendoza, Rubén Garfias and Jason Manuel Olazábal in *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue* at Center Theatre Group's Kirk Douglas Theatre. Directed by Shishir Kurup.

Photo: Craig Schwartz

