

THE UMBRELLASM
STAGE COMPANY

*Umbrella Stage Company
commission in its World Premiere*

MIDDLETON HEIGHTS



A raw, loving, laugh-
out-loud story of an
immigrant family and
their pursuit of the
American dream.
by Hortense Gerardo

2022–2023 SEASON

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ABOUT THE UMBRELLA

OUR MISSION

The Umbrella enriches lives and builds a vibrant and inclusive community through the arts. We promote creativity, learning, personal growth, and cultural exchange through accessible arts education programs, performing and visual arts presentations, and community collaborations.

OUR HISTORY

Land Acknowledgement: Related to our mission of enriching lives and building a vibrant, inclusive community through the arts, we would like to acknowledge that the land we use for classes and events—the land on which The Umbrella is built here in the Muskettaquid area—are the original homelands of the Nipmuc and Massachusetts peoples. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory, and we honor and respect the many diverse Indigenous peoples still connected to this land on which we gather.

The Building:

Built as a high school in 1929 and the town's first steelbeamed structure, Emerson School has long been an important historic and architectural landmark in downtown Concord. The building served as a public school for more than five decades before it was deemed obsolete and insufficient for a growing student population.

The Organization:

In the early 1980's, a group of Concord volunteers and visionaries realized that the aging Emerson School building, slated for demolition, could be saved and converted into a community arts center. So, in 1982, The Umbrella's founders obtained tax-exempt status as a private non-profit organization and developed a detailed multi-use proposal for the building, which the Board of Selectmen approved in 1983. This agreement retains the spirit of the original deed, which states that the land will be used for education, and is still in place today. The Town of Concord retains ownership of the building, which it leases to The Umbrella Arts Center, which in turn is responsible for programming, operating, building maintenance, and capital improvement costs.

The Umbrella, Inc. is a qualified 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

THE UMBRELLA STAGE COMPANY PRESENTS

MIDDLETON HEIGHTS

WORLD PREMIERE PRODUCTION

By Hortense Gerardo

Produced by Brian Boruta

Directed by Michelle Aguilion

Stage Managed by
Anna Hahn*

Sound Design by
James Cannon

Lighting Design by
SeifAllah
Salotto-Cristóbal

Properties & Set Dressing by
Sarajane Morse Mullins

Costume Design by
Maureen Festa

Technical Direction and
Scenic Design by
Al Forgione

Hair & Makeup by
Gabrielle Hatcher

SPONSORS

This show is sponsored by Gregory Maguire and Andy Newman

Assistive Listening Devices are available at this performance.

If you would like to inquire about using one, ask an usher or a member of house management.

MIDDLETON HEIGHTS

Cast

Steve Bermundo as U/S Dad

Justin Budinoff as Dad

Cheryl Daro* as Meena

Liza Fermin-Granada as Mom

Jenine Florence Jacinto as Boy/Isabel (U/S Meena/Moe)

Jude Torres as Moe

* Appearing through an Agreement between this theater and Actor's Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

Actors' Equity Association ("Equity"), founded in 1913, is the U.S. labor union that represents more than 51,000 professional Actors and Stage Managers. Equity fosters the art of live theatre as an essential component of society and advances the careers of its members by negotiating wages, improving working conditions and providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. Actors' Equity is a member of the AFL-CIO and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions.

Equity is governed by its own members through an elected Council, representing principal actors, chorus actors and stage managers living in three regions: Eastern, Central and Western. Members at large participate in Equity's governance through a system of regional Boards and Committees. Equity has 28 designated area liaison cities with over 100 members each.



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Welcome to The Umbrella Stage Company's 2022/2023 season.

We are beyond happy to be bringing live theater to the region. While the pandemic took its toll on all of us, The Umbrella has remained strong and is committed to continuing to produce bold, daring, and innovative work.

The pandemic has forced many of us to reconsider how we work, what we produce, and what that impact has on our community. During your visit to The Umbrella, I encourage you to spend some time in our Gallery, wander through the three floors of artist studios, and peek into our classrooms. I hope that tonight's performance will leave you wanting to not only come back for more theater, but also to sign up for an art class, come to a gallery opening or concert or film, visit us at Winter Market and Open Studios, engage with our Arts & Environment program, tour our outdoors public art installations, or become a volunteer.

There are so many ways you can participate in the Arts at The Umbrella. We look forward to seeing more of you.

Enjoy the show!

Jerry Wedge
Executive Director
TheUmbrellaArts.org

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jerry Wedge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop for the letter 'J'.

Letter from the Director of Performing Arts:

Welcome!

I am thrilled that you have chosen to join us for this world premiere of Middleton Heights, The Umbrella Stage Company's first ever full-length commission piece.

It was quite the journey bringing Middleton Heights to life! After several schedule changes, through many script iterations, table readings, and workshops, we are excited to bring this family's story to the stage.

The idea for a full-length commissioned piece was actually born out of our pandemic-era virtual programming. While we could not be in our theaters making art together, we turned to local playwrights who penned short plays to be presented in a virtual space. The work of these playwrights helped us maintain some sense of normalcy, and remain connected to our artists and our audiences even while we could not be together.

When the time came to return to our theaters in-person, we knew that we wanted to hold space for locally grown work and continue to build upon the relationships we established through our virtual programming.

Working closely with Hortense has been a joy, and Michelle has been so integral to building The Umbrella's program for many years. The play that they have created is so uniquely specific to this one family, and yet so beautifully universal in the way that it explores their intergenerational experience in American society. I hope that whoever you are and however you come into this space, you will see a piece of your own experience reflected back to you through their lens.

Thank you for joining us! We still have much in store for the rest of the season. Coming in April Director BW Gonzalez, who appeared in last season's *The Colored Museum*, is staging an all-new production of *The Color Purple*, and we have just re-launched our partnership with The Concord Film Project, offering monthly film screenings. Also, stay tuned for announcements regarding our 2023-2024 season!

Enjoy the show!

Brian Boruta, *Director of Performing Arts*

Who's who in *Middleton Heights*



Steve Bermundo (*Understudy Dad*) makes his acting debut in *Middleton Heights* here at The Umbrella. He is the son of Filipino parents Imelda and Amante Bermundo. Born in Quezon City, the Philippines, he emigrated with his family to California in 1974. For over 20 years, he worked as a dancer in L.A., grateful to perform with artists such as Rihanna, Ricky Martin, and Tina Turner. Later, Steve pursued a career in art, moving to Massachusetts with his husband in 2018, where he began to work as an illustrator here in Concord. Not quite ready to quit the stage, when he saw the call to audition in Concord for a play about an immigrant Filipino family, he couldn't ignore the signs. As a dancer, Steve learned to convey stories through movement.

Middleton Heights will mark his first time telling stories as an actor. Steve is honored and thrilled to be performing alongside this talented cast as well as working under the direction of Michelle Aguillon.



Justin Budinoff (*Dad*) is thrilled to be appearing at The Umbrella for the first time and working with an all-Filipino cast in a new work. Favorite past roles include Happy in *Death of a Salesman*, Colonel Brandon in *Sense and Sensibility*, Ricci in *Passion* and Duke Vincentio in *Measure For Measure*. Thanks to all at The Umbrella for this opportunity. This performance is dedicated to his Kapampangan family - Dakal a salamat!



Cheryl Daro* (*Meena*) is a Las Vegas- based Filipino-American actor/producer. She is thrilled to return to the Boston area and make her Umbrella Stage Company debut in *Middleton Heights*. She was most recently seen as Claire in *Proof* (Central Square Theatre), *Love Letters* (The Space LV) and played Gigi Van Tran in *Miss Saigon* (Tony Award-winning Signature Theatre in DC.) Highlights include: *Chess*; *Rock of Ages*; *The Wild Party*. Ms. Daro attended Atlantic Theater School in 2009. She's the Co-Creator of Mondays Dark (www.mondaydark.com), an organization that had raised over \$1.6 million for local Vegas charities over the last 10 years. Ms. Daro hopes to continue to share her story and the stories of those who came

before her. Representation is the key to the future. Thanks to Mark for believing in her before she did. She's a proud member of Actor's Equity. Follow her journey on Instagram: @seedaro

Who's who in *Middleton Heights*



Liza Fermin-Granada (*Mom*) is thrilled to return to The Umbrella Stage Company for the world premiere production of *Middleton Heights*! She is a first generation Filipino-American with Midwest roots. Lisa was away from theater for quite some time, but was honored to return to theater at the Umbrella Stage Company's 2019 production of *Joy Luck Club*. Other theater credits include *The Partition* (Mosesian Theater), *Automat* (Jakespeare Theater), *AAPC Playfest 4* (Starlight Square Theater), including virtual and staged readings with HowlRound Theater, Asian-American Playwright Collective, and AATAB/PAO/CHUANG STAGE. Industrial/Commercial/

Film credits include *National Mentoring Month* (Gusto Production), *The Path* (Curry College), Raytheon (Raytheon Technologies), Julia (HBO Max Production), Simmons (Wright Brain Productions). Lisa dedicates this show to her loving supportive family, and to the numerous immigrants, who have sacrificed so much to come to America in hopes of a better life.



Jenine Florence Jacinto (*Isabel/Boy, U/S Meena/Moe*) is honored for this to be their first production with The Umbrella Stage Company! Stage credits include Peter/Boy in *Peter and the Starcatcher* (CCTC/HJT); Sam in *The Kash of Kaimuki* (Kumi Kahua Theater); B1/B2/Michael in *A Number and Fergus in Finding the Sun* (Smith College - Denton Snyder Acting Prize); and Tilly Evans in *She Kills Monsters* (New Ways Theatre). Jenine Florence also has a passion for voice acting and TTRPG podcasts! Playing Marty Bakunawa/Lapis in *Beyond the Furthest Stars* (1Up Podcast); Guest in *WanderHome* (QueerPG); and Sam in *Bao-Baozil*, 包子 (Bāozi) (Matchbox Theatre Company). Special thanks to all those who have supported them and

been there throughout their acting journey! But most importantly they give the biggest thanks to Hortense, Michelle, Jude, Cheryl, Justin, Lisa, and Steve for creating our own little Fil-Am family throughout this show! IG: @jenine.florence



Jude Torres (*Moe*) Was last seen at the Umbrella as Jonathan Harker in *Dracula* and Moe in the preview of *Middleton Heights* at the 2021 Concord Festival of Authors. LA-born/Boston-bred, his stage credits include The Playwright in *Vietgone* (Company One), Bobbie in *Song of Morning* (Boston Theater Marathon), Riff in *West Side Story* (Moonstruck Theater), Ram in *Heathers* (Footlight Club), Favorite Son in *American Idiot*, and the titular *Wedding Singer* (Phoenix Playmakers), with voice credits including Speakeasy Stage, Fresh Ink, New Rep, Central Square, Liberty Mutual, and Chuang Stage. Jude is a songwriter (FuzzKill), musician (Theater Offensive), composer (Harvard University), and stagehand (ART) who holds a BS

Biology/Musical Theater (Emmanuel College) and an MS Speech Language Pathology with a concentration in Voice Disorders (MGH Institute of Health Professions). Much love to this incredible team, and special thanks to Meesh, Brian, KB, and his cat, Munchkin de Milo. IG: @heyjudetorres

Who's who in Middleton Heights



Brian Boruta (Producer, Director) This is Brian's 47th production with The Umbrella and his 44th as the Director of Performing Arts, during which time he has earned Best Production nominations for *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*, *Red*, *Angels in America*, *Equus* and *Bonnie & Clyde*; a DASH Award for Best Play for *True West* and *To Kill A Mockingbird*, and Best Musical for *Parade* and *Big Fish*. Umbrella directing credits include: *Parade* (Dash Award for Best Director of a Musical) *Big Fish* (DASH Nom.), *Hair*, *Evita*, *Side Show*, *Next to Normal*, *The Rocky Horror Show*. Elsewhere: *Sweeney Todd*, *Legally Blonde*, *Godspell*, *Seussical the Musical*, *The Actor's Nightmare*, *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You*. Favorite on-stage

credits include Billy Lawlor in *42nd Street* (DASH Nom.), Judas/ John the Baptist in *Godspell*, Cosmo Brown in *Singin' in the Rain*, Austin in *True West*, and Greg in *A Chorus Line*. As a designer and educator, Brian has worked with numerous college, high school and community groups including Merrimack College, Goddard College, Framingham State University, The Performing Arts Center of MetroWest, Brookline, Chelsea and Wellesley Public School. His solo piece, *UnMasqued*, has been workshopped and performed at the Wheeler Theater in Port Townsend, WA. Brian holds a Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College and was named the recipient of the 2014 Framingham State University Young Alumni Achievement Award for his work in the performing arts.



Michelle M. Aguillon (Director) Umbrella: *Dracula* (a feminist revenge fantasy, really), *Fences*, *Disgraced*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *True West*. Others: *The Piano Lesson*, *Rapture Blister Burn* (Vokes), *Hold These Truths* (Hope Summer Rep), *Sylvia*, *Passion* (Theater Uncorked, DASH Winner 2022), *Asian-American Playwright Collective PlayFest* (Starlight), *The Walking Plays* (Lyric), *Boston Resilience Project Plays: East Boston*, *Nos Vemos* (Speakeasy), *Augusta and Noble* (Emerson), *Vietgone* (Company One), *Proof* (Central Square), *Clybourne Park*, *Terra Nova*, *Of Mice and Men* (Quannapowitt), *Sense and Sensibility* (Concord Players), *Rabbit Hole* (EMACTfest Winner 2014), *Marjorie Prime*, *Pillowman*, *Kimberly Akimbo*, *Looking for Normal*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *G.R. Point* (Hovey, IRNE Winner 2004). Michelle

is the Executive Director of the Creative Arts School in Reading. She is a proud board member at EACT and StageSource. In March 2023, Michelle directs the world premiere of *Middleton Heights* by Hortense Gerardo at The Umbrella. (she/her/hers)

Who's who in Middleton Heights



Hortense Gerardo (Playwright) is an anthropologist as well as a playwright. She is the Director of the Anthropology, Performance, and Technology (APT) Program at the University of California, San Diego and her works have been performed nationally and internationally, including: LaMama Experimental Theatre, the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Boston, the International Performance Art Festival, the Performance Mix Festival, The Fence, and the Nuit Blanche Festival, Toronto. She is a co-founder of the Asian American Playwright Collective (AAPC) and serves as Head of Screenwriting on the Board of the Woods Hole Film Festival and as an advisor for its Film and Science Initiative. Her feature-length documentary on climate change, *Small Steps: Dances of Resilience*, won juried awards for Best Environmental Film at the Vancouver Film

Festival and Best Dance Film in the Rome International Film Festival. She is the former Artist-in-Residence at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), received a 2021 Artist Fellowship from the Mass Cultural Council in Dramatic Writing, and is currently a Changemaker Anti-Racist Pedagogy Learning Community Fellow at the University of California, San Diego. Her new media audience interactive commissioned work, *Glacial Incantations*, will be presented in April as part of the 2023 Without Walls Festival (WoW) produced by La Jolla Playhouse. Her play, *Between the Hour of Dog and Wolf* will be presented at this year's XXV Boston Theatre Marathon. www.hortensegerardo.com

Tree Brock (Wardrobe Supervisor) Tree Brock is proud to be working with The Umbrella Stage Company again after joining them as Wardrobe Supervisor in Rent. They have previously worked as the costume designer with Hovey Theatre doing *Witch*, *Marjory Prime*, and *Pillowman*. They were also costume designer with The Christmas Carol in Waltham. Tree also works backstage and does costume work for various performers at *Drag Me to Brunch* and *Strut*. Their company is Red Bark Crafting at www.redbarkcrafts.com and they believe you should fly your fandom banners proudly.

James Cannon (Sound Designer) is a freelance audio engineer, sound designer, composer, and music producer from Chicago, IL, and currently based in Watertown, MA. Recent theatrical credits include: *The View Upstairs* (Speakeasy Stage), *Well*, *Straight White Men* (Hovey Players), *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Passing Strange* (Moonbox Productions), *The Last Wide Open*, *The Old Man & The Old Moon*, *Head Over Heels*, *The Colored Museum*, *Dracula*, *Rent* (The Umbrella Stage Company), *NIGHTTOWN: An Operatic Reimagining of James Joyce's Ulysses* (Lowell House Opera), and *Spring Awakening* (Wellesley Theater Project).

Who's who in *Middleton Heights*

SeifAllah Salotto-Cristóbal (Lighting and Projections Designer) is excited to be back at The Umbrella Stage Company for his 10th season. He has been telling stories using light and video for the past 17 years. He holds a Master of Fine Arts in Design from the University of Missouri-Kansas City with a focus on Lighting and Projection Design. His career has taken him across the country and has allowed him to design for many companies in Opera, Dance, and Theater including most recently at Opera Maine (Portland, ME), Portland Stage Company (Portland, ME), Portland Theater Festival (Portland, ME), Brown/Trinity Rep MFA Program (Providence, RI), Wagon Wheel Center for the Arts (Warsaw, IN), and Theater at Monmouth (Monmouth, ME). He currently serves as the Assistant Professor of Lighting Design at the University of Southern Maine where he brings his knowledge and experience to help shape the next generation of theater professionals, focusing on developing complete storytelling and creating a more equitable industry. www.seif.design

Maureen Festa (Costume Design) is thrilled to return to The Umbrella after a three year hiatus. Recent work at The Umbrella includes: Hedwig and the Angry Inch, View from The Bridge, Dear Elizabeth, and To Kill A Mockingbird (DASH nominee, Best Costumes). Other work: All My Sons (Praxis Stage); Sweeney Todd (Theater Uncorked); The Aliens and Party Time (Theatre on Fire); Enchanted April (Hovey Players, DASH nominee, best costumes); Andrew Lippa's The Wild Party and And Then There Were None (Footlight Club, both DASH nominees, best costumes), An Ideal Husband (The Footlight Club, DASH Award, Best Costumes); Father of the Bride (Divine Stage Works, DASH nominee, best costumes). By day, Maureen is the Associate Director, Prospect Research at Northeastern University, and a new resident of the North Shore with her husband and their three cats.

Al Forgiione (Technical Director and Scenic Design)'s design and scenic work has been showcased across the United States and United Kingdom. A native of the Boston area, Al has a BA in Theatre Arts from Bridgewater State College and a MA from the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama. Middleton Heights is Al's second design credit with The Umbrella (Avenue Q, 2019), and his twenty-ninth credit overall, having joined The Umbrella as Technical Director in 2014. forgionedesign.com

Anna Hanh* (Stage Manager) is a newer member of Actors Equity Association who started her journey stage managing A Comedy of Errors at Clark University until its abrupt halt at the start of the pandemic. She then transitioned to all-virtual shows with The Umbrella Arts, Pao Arts Center, and Asian American Theatre Artists of Boston (AATAB). Once theaters began reopening, she enjoyed stage managing in person with Studio Theatre Worcester in its productions of The Gift of the Magi and most recently, Next to Normal.

Who's who in *Middleton Heights*

Gabrielle Hatcher (Hair and Makeup) is thrilled to be working with The Umbrella after appearing as Lucy Westenra in *Dracula* earlier this season. She was seen in The Asian American Playwright Collective's Playfest 4. She recently designed hair for *Sense and Sensibility* at Concord Players, for which she won a DASH award, and designed sets for *Pillowman* at Hovey Players. Other credits include *Stop Kiss* and *Some Girls* at Hovey Players, The 48 Hour Film Project, and the National Film Challenge.

Sarajane Morse Mullins (Properties and Set Dressing) is a Boston-based actor and theater artist. Previous Umbrella credits for properties and set dressings include *Dracula*, *Tuck Everlasting*, *42nd Street*, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (Dash Nomination), and *Joy Luck Club*. Past appearances on the Umbrella stage include *Lucille in Parade* (Dash Nomination), *Blanche Barrow* in *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arts Impulse nomination, DASH nomination), and ensemble roles in *Tuck Everlasting*, *Big Fish* and *Evita*. SJ holds a BFA in Theater Arts from Boston University and trained abroad with the London Academy of Music and Drama. She has appeared at The Huntington Theater Company, Greater Boston Stage Company, Turtle Lane Playhouse, and over 50 productions in the Midwest. She annually adjudicates for the Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild. More at www.officiallysarajane.com

Sarah O'Neill (Assistant Stage Manager) was last seen at the Umbrella as stage manager for The Umbrella@Home's virtual production of *Torched/Asian-American* in Harvard Square. She was also assistant stage manager for The Umbrella's *The View from the Bridge* and Andrew Lippa's *The Wild Party*. Other recent stage management credits also include: stage manager for *Light Up the Sky*, *Angel Street*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Light in the Piazza* (Arlington Friends of the Drama), *The Asian American Playwright Festivals 2020* (virtual), 2021 and 2022 (*Starlight Square*), *Ruthless! The Musical* (Theater UnCorked/Calderwood Pavilion), *Enchanted April* (TCAN Players), assistant stage manager for *The Graduate* (Arlington Friends of the Drama) and production assistant for *The Piano Lesson* (Vokes Theater). She is also a member of the volunteer staff of the Boston Asian American Film Festival (BAAFF) and serves as the current president of Boston Korean Adoptees, Inc.

John Penney (Audio Op) has worked as a fly captain and stage carpenter at The Umbrella since its production of *42nd Street* in 2019. He most recently was assistant stage manager on The Umbrella's productions *Dracula*, *The Last Wide Open* and *The Old Man and The Old Moon*. He has also worked as a crewchief for the Opera Institute's production of *The Cunning Little Vixen* and as fly captain/stage operations staff member for several seasons at The Glimmerglass Festival.

Note From The Director

When I met our playwright, Hortense Gerardo, in the late 90s, we were introduced to each other since we were the only two Filipinos in our little theater world back then, and this mutual friend thought we should know each other, perhaps work together. Because it's true, there weren't a lot of us in the Boston theater community then. Our meeting had an awkward beginning, especially after asking Hortense if she "writes a lot about Filipinos?" She responded "I write about Humans!" We laugh about that memory so much now.

Hortense and I have come a long way since then, bumping into each other over the years. I wondered if we would ever work together. The opportunity would come in 2018 when I was involved in a play that Hortense wrote. We have remained connected since, working on many plays and projects together, stories that centered on Filipino characters. However, this one, Middleton Heights, is our first together in a fully produced World Premiere at The Umbrella.

Middleton Heights focuses on a Filipino family making a life here in the United States. There so much in this play that Hortense and I obviously relate to, since we are both products of very similar experiences. But I also believe Hortense has written a play that most anyone can relate to, especially if you come from an immigrant family.

I am so proud to be part of a company that tells diverse stories. I could not be more grateful to Brian Boruta and the entire Umbrella Stage Company family for entrusting us in the telling of this play, and for support and encouragement.

Big shout out to the Asian American Playwright Collective (AAPC) of Boston for being the breeding ground for Hortense's and my plays and stories. More shoutouts to the Asian American Theater Artists of Boston (AATAB) and Chuang Stage for their inspiration and support.

I am also so grateful to the many Asian American Pacific Islander actors who came out to audition for this play. New England should be proud to have such talent amongst us and they should all be working in every theater space possible! Thank you to our Middleton Heights cast for taking on this play and embodying its characters so beautifully.

I am most grateful to Hortense for her play. Our collaborations, especially this one, made us closer and we've become like sisters, and closer as colleagues and artists. I feel happy and privileged to be able to work on such a piece and with Hortense.

-Michelle Aguillon, **Director**

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Note About Middleton Heights

Middleton Heights is not an autobiographical play. Its characters and scenes are crafted for theatrical effect. That said, the play is heavily informed by historical events, translated through the lens of having been raised in a Midwestern suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, at a time when I was unaware of the existence of any other people of color in the neighborhood. The identifier "person of color" was not in common parlance back then. Rather, our neighbors were identified by their ethnic backgrounds and the occupation of the head of household: the German construction man and his family next door, the Greek tailor and his wife on the other side, the Irish plumber and his family a few doors down. Against this backdrop, our identity as Filipinos was secondary to the acknowledgment that both my parents were physicians: their occupation seemed to serve as a shorthand for their moral integrity and a key to our family being welcomed with open arms as members of our community.

This idyllic environment of childhood memory stands in contrast to what I only fully comprehended in adulthood as an ongoing undercurrent of strained race relations associated with Cleveland, and which manifested to my family with our arrival in the city during the summer of the Hough riots in 1966 to the protests in the aftermath of the killing of Tamir Rice in 2014, the time span of this piece.

In contemplating the many reasons why my parents - and many immigrants - choose to leave their native homeland and make America their home, I was reminded of the voices of relatives and family friends who were both very proud to be making a life for themselves in the United States and yet pined for the sense of family, tradition, and belonging they associated with their native land, in this family's case, the Philippines.

In the same way that languages, like Icelandic - whose roots can be traced back to the oldest Nordic language spoken in Scandinavia between 200 and 800 AD - are frozen in time by its outlier speakers, so too, the American Dream seems to take sturdier root when the seeds are planted abroad in the imagination of immigrants coming to America. For those like my parents who had to earn their US citizenship, the promises of their chosen land of opportunity seem tantalizingly attainable with hard work, a can-do attitude, and a lot of faith, and in many instances, The Dream can and does become reality.

However, there is also another reality, one described by the sociologist, Lauren Berlant, in her book, *Cruel Optimism*, a state in which something you desire - an object, a lifestyle, a belief - becomes an obstacle to your ability to flourish. For some, the persistence of the simple formula of attaining the American Dream can shutter one's eyes to the realities of intersectional and structural racism, misogyny, and classism. This is the inchoate push and pull of the seemingly insignificant patter among DAD, MOM, MOE, and MEENA, a meditation

From the Playwright

on how this family, neither Crazy Rich Asians, nor the subjects of what has been labeled “poverty porn” in depictions of brown people in popular Western Culture, are in their way, an anachronistic embodiment of The American Dream, living as they do in Middleton Heights.

I wish to thank Brian Boruta, Stewart Ikeda, and the production team of The Umbrella Stage Company for entrusting me with their (and my!) first commissioned work of a full-length play. I cannot thank Michelle Aguillon enough not only for her brilliant work as a director, but for being a mentor, a sister, and a friend, and who made this production possible by introducing me to Brian Boruta and The Umbrella. I am thankful for the supportive community of playwrights and theater artists who are members of the Asian American Playwright Collective (AAPC), the Asian American Theatre Artists of Boston (AATAB) and the United Asian American Pacific Islander (UAAPI) Artists who have nurtured and enriched my work by encouraging me embrace my Filipino American identity; to Michael J. Bobbitt and the Mass Cultural Council for enabling the work of artists by providing financial support in the form of grants and awards; and to Kate Snodgrass and the Boston Playwrights’ Theatre for helping me sustain the dream of being a playwright by producing the Boston Theater Marathon and enabling me and other perpetually “emerging” playwrights to see their short plays fully produced by members of our thriving Boston theater community while at the same time raising awareness and resources for the Theatre Community Benevolent Fund.

Finally, thank you to my family, who have been a constant source of enlightening discussions, comic relief, dramatic insight, and a lifetime of love. To my father, may he rest in peace: ayayaten ka.

- Hortense Gerardo, **Playwright**

GLOSSARY TAGALOG AND ILOCANO WORDS:

Anak– a term of endearment, meaning, “child.”

Ay, Nako– a term of slight exasperation, as in, “oh, dear!” in English.

Bakla– a term referring to a male or non-binary person who displays traditionally feminine characteristics.

Iha– a term of endearment, meaning, “child.”

Malacanang– the name of the President’s residence in the Philippines.

Pandesal– a type of sweet, Filipino bread roll.

Putang Ina– this is a very coarse expletive referring to one’s mother’s genitals.

Tanga– askew, crazy

MIDDLETON HEIGHTS

TIMELINE

Villalobos coined
“Las Islas
Felipenas” after
King Philip II of
Spain

1543

Spain transfers
sovereignty of the
Philippines to
Americans

1898



1521

Ferdinand Magellan
killed in battle by
Philippine hero Chief
Lapulapu

1896

Philippine nationalist
Jose Rizal executed for
sedition

1966

Four African
Americans killed and
50 injured during the
Hough riots in
Cleveland

1968

The Reverend Martin
Luther King, Jr. and
Robert F. Kennedy
are assassinated



1967

Carl Burton Stokes
elected one of the first
Black elected mayors of
a major city, Cleveland

1970

Four students are killed
and nine wounded by the
Ohio National Guard at
Kent State University

The Cleveland Browns
aka the Kardiac Kids
repeatedly win in the
final moments

1980

President Ronald
Reagan is shot by
John Hinckley Jr. in
Washington D.C.

1981



1981

Marcos lifts martial law
while retaining
dictatorial power



1982

Margaret Thatcher
declares war in the
Falklands The war ends
in 74 days



66,000 Filipinos
and 10,000
American soldiers
in the Bataan
Death March

1942



1899

The Philippine-
American war begins

1946

US grants
independence to
the Philippines

Five men are arrested
for a break-in at the
Democratic National
Headquarters

1972

Nixon delivers his
resignation speech
in the aftermath of
Watergate

1974



1972

President Ferdinand
Marcos imposes martial
law in the Philippines



1975

The fall of Saigon ends
the Vietnam War

Benigno Aquino, Jr.,
a political rival to
President Ferdinand
Marcos is assassinated

1983

Twelve year-old African
American boy Tamir
Rice shot by a white
police officer

2014



1986

President Ferdinand
Marcos announces his
resignation

2023

Middleton Heights
opens at the Umbrella
Arts Center in
Concord, MA

MIDDLETON HEIGHTS

Production Staff

Producer.....	Brian Boruta
Director	Michelle Aguillon
Stage Manager.....	Anna Hanh*
Assistant Stage Manager	Sarah O’Neill
Lighting and Projections Designer	SeifAllah Sallotto-Cristóbal
Sound Designer	James Cannon
Audio Op.....	John Penney
Scenic Designer & Tech Director	Al Forgione
Scenic Charge.....	Page Evett
Costume Designer.....	Maureen Festa
Wardrobe Supervisor	Tree Brock
Properties and Set Dressing	Sarajane Mullins
Hair & Makeup.....	Gabrielle Hatcher
COVID Safety Officer.....	Cathie Regan
Playbill Designer	Joe Blair, Sarah Shiner
Michelle Aguillon.....	Director
James Cannon.....	Sound Designer

Acknowledgements

Asian American
Playwrights Collective

Asian American
Theater Artists of Boston

API Arts Network

Boston Asian American Film Festival

Concord Bookshop

Concord Cheese Shop

Concord Removal Service

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Chuang Stage

FilAm Arts Los Angeles

Iskwelahang Pilipino of Boston

Lauren Granada, WPTZ NBC5

NAAC ArtsBoston

Pao Arts Center

Trish Fontinella, BosFilipinos

Our 2022-2023 Season was created in collaboration with members of The Umbrella Stage family, including Board, Staff, Directors, Designers, and Performers. We extend our deepest thanks for their time, insights, and perspectives.

Casey Carlson..... Board Member
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Shani Farrell.....Performer
Stewart Ikeda..... Director of Marketing and Communications
Kara Chu NelsonPerformer
Barbara Pierre.....Performer
Jerry Wedge..... Executive Director
Nancy Curran WillisDirector
Eileen Williston..... Deputy Director
Deb Yamin Board Chair

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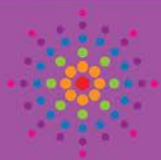
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April 5-23

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