



Micha Espinosa

Full Professor Narrative
Associate Professor, Micha Espinosa

A voice, text, and acting coach, dialect designer, interdisciplinary performing artist, author, and internationally recognized senior-level teacher. My artistic practice intertwines with my pedagogy and my creative research. I do creative research with theater companies, training institutes and communities across the nation and internationally.

I approach my practice, pedagogy, and research as a vehicle for social change. Further, I utilize a framework of identity, awareness, and empowerment towards the development of transformation. Since advancing to tenure in 2013, I have designed and coached twenty-two productions, created eleven site-specific performances, co-edited an award-winning resource guide, *Scenes for Latinx Actors: Voices of the New American Theatre* (Smith and Krause, 2019), coedited with Cynthia Santos-Decure; authored a peer review article in the journal of

record for my field and my articles have been cited in numerous publications. I have given master classes (invited) in voice and liberation practices in China, Australia, Singapore, Spain, Lithuania, Bali, Cuba, Chile, Peru, Argentina, Mexico, and Colombia as well as numerous venues across the United States. I have received awards for my impact in the field and been recognized by American Theatre magazine, the premiere national publication for the industry.

Research & Creative Activity

My first Creative Research Sample highlights my work at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF). Founded in 1935, the Tony award-winning festival is among the oldest and largest professional non-profit theatres in the nation. The festival serves close to 400,000 patrons per year, and only seasoned veterans are offered the guest artist voice and text contracts. I believe I was chosen not only for my skill (the ability to guide performers and groups to fulfill the vocal demands of the production, including audibility, intelligibility, and speech design, as well as linguistic, historical, and social analysis of texts and its application to performance) but because of my commitment to diversity and inclusion and my understanding that social justice is central to the festival's mission. As a designer at the festival, I am invited to speak publicly about my vision during the show introductions (Sample #1). In 2019, I coached three shows at Oregon Shakespeare, including two world

premieres: *Mother Road* by Octavio Solis and *Comedia of Errors* by Lydia Garcia and Bill Rauch. In both of these plays the challenge presented was to coach Spanish to actors who were not bilingual. In *Comedia*, I had the task of transforming an actor who spoke no Spanish into an entire lead role in which he must sound like a native Spanish speaker. I highlight this challenge because it inspired my forthcoming chapter in the anthology *Latinx Shakespeare* edited by Carla De la Gatta and Trevor Buffone called, "What's with the Spanish dude? identity development, language acquisition, and shame while coaching Oregon Shakespeare's *Comedia of Errors*." The third show I had the pleasure of working on was the newly envisioned, radically inclusive *Hairspray* with diversely-abled actors directed by Chris Moore. The shows and my work on them garnered rave reviews, and in 2020 I was invited back to work on another world premiere *Copper Children* written by Karen Zacarias and directed by Shariffa Ali and Peter in *The Star Catcher* written by Rick Elise and directed by Lavina Jadwhani. Working on these plays has solidified my process of identity conscious character-driven design. My research presentations on these subjects at the Association of Theatre in Higher Education conference and the Voice and Speech Trainers Association conferences are well attended and the dialogue between

colleagues is advancing the field. In March 2019, I was featured as a dialect designer to notice in American Theatre Magazine People to Watch, “Roll Call.”

My second Research Sample, *Scenes for Latinx Actors: Voices of the New American Theatre* (Smith and Krause, 2019), co-edited with Cynthia Santos-Decure, expands on my first award-winning book, *Monologues for Latino/a Actors: A Resource Guide to Contemporary Latino/a Playwrights for Actors and Teachers* (Smith and Krause 2014). *Scenes for Latinx Actors: Voices of the New American Theatre* won the 2019 International Latino Book Award in the Best Academic Resource category. I am extremely proud of the impact these books are having on diversifying the field. I strongly believe that the pursuit of social change starts in the classroom and rehearsal hall. The scene book was designed to disprove the illusion that there is scarcity in the field. It is my goal to lift the Latinx narrative and to create an abundance of resources for actors, teachers, and the profession. The book offers forty-three scenes and is being used in high schools, colleges, and conservatories across the United

States, Canada, and Great Britain. The book’s playwrights come from a variety of cultural backgrounds; each playwright is interviewed about their identity, the text and its performance. The interviews replace generic descriptions and place identity at the forefront which is a departure from other scene books. The innovation in the books structure pedagogically scaffolds in for the reader an understanding of culturally competency and Latinx acting styles. I am already under contract with Routledge to co-edit, *Latinx Actor Training: Critical Approaches and Culturally Inclusive Pedagogies* (release 2022). The book will illuminate the history and future of Latino/a/x actor training practices and approaches by offering an array of contributions from actor trainers, directors, and scholars addressing Latinx processes and culturally inclusive methods, including interviews with key figures in Latinx theatre. Additionally, I have a peer-reviewed article in the journal of record for my field *Teaching in Cuba: A Voice Teacher’s Perceptions of Two Contrasting Learning Environments and The Effects of Commodification* (*Voice and Speech Review*, 2014). Since advancing to associate, I have given eighteen conference presentations and been an invited presenter at eleven think tanks (with national organizations such as the *Latino Theatre Commons* and *Theatre Communications Group*) to critically reflect with my

colleagues on issues of diversity, ethics, pedagogy, global perspectives, and social justice. The Arizona State University Chicano, Latino, Faculty and Staff Association recognized my efforts, as I was the recipient of the 2018 Alberto Álvaro Ríos Sangre de Arte Award. Ríos is Arizona's Poet Laureate. The award, created in his name to honor his legacy, recognizes excellence in mentorship of Latinx students and the advocacy and promotion of Latinx artists and their stories.

My third Research Sample is a podcast with the legendary dialectician Paul Meier, *In a Manner of Speaking* (March 2020). The podcast features renowned linguist including David Crystal, Audie Award-winning audiobook narrators Tavia Gilbert and Julia Whelan, and the relevant and impactful dialect designers of our times. I was honored to be part of this project and I was asked to speak on my experience with Latinx identity and culture, Spanish Language pronunciation, linguistic oppression, intersectionality, English-only movements, border theory, identity-driven dialect design and its relationship to shame. Engaging in this popular medium allows me to combat the despairing national rhetoric around Latino identities and immigrant narratives. I pair

this sample with an excerpt from a recent site-specific performance and film, *Where the Border Walls Ends* (Caliche Production 2019). *Where the Border Wall Ends* featured dozens of Arizona artists, musicians, activists and community members. It was filmed at the place where the existing border wall ends in Sasabe, Arizona. I led the lamentation and performed in the piece. During the podcast I discuss my activism and performance, using mass dance ritual and mass lamentation to allow the community to respond to the ongoing border crisis. This collaborative-creative research on activism, border identity, and lamentation is gaining international attention.

My fourth Research Sample offers documentation of the breadth and depth of my international work in activism (a portmanteau word combining art and activism). I begin with my collaborations with Guillermo Gómez Peña and La Pocha Nostra. Gómez-Peña (MacArthur and USA Artists Fellow; Guggenheim and Bessie Award winner) has contributed to cultural debates for nearly 30 years, staging seminal performance art pieces. His longest project, *La Pocha Nostra* (LPN), is a transdisciplinary arts organization devoted to erasing the borders. As a

main contributor with LPN, my site-specific performances are based in text and extended voice techniques. Since tenure, I have developed seven pieces with LPN. I also have a forthcoming contributing chapter on vocal inventions in *La Pocha Nostra: A handbook for the rebel artist in a post-democratic society* (Routledge, 2020), edited by Guillermo Gomez-Peña and Saul Garcia Lopez. I also have a chapter of activist themed poetry in his new multi-lingual, experimental poetry book *Glosolalia*, edited by Guillermo Gómez Peña (Mantarraya Ediciones, 2020). My extended voice techniques and pedagogy are being featured in a special edition “Sound Acts” of the peer-reviewed journal *Performance Matters* (Simon Fraser University, 2020). I pair this work with another research sample, the creation of *Mujeres Poderosas* with teaching artist Elena De La Fuente (Peru), a project imaged and created around International Women's Day. Using voice as a site of identity and investigation, a group of artists and activists marched and performed with the legendary performance troupe, Yuyachkani. Then, in a ten-day live art laboratory, we explored transformation and liberation practices in the reinvention of the feminine self—the project culminated in a public performance. The last portion of this research sample demonstrates how I, as lead producer, brought international theater actions to ASU and the Phoenix community. These theatre actions are a worldwide series of readings and performances of

short plays. I have produced three Climate Change play events with ASU (2015, 2017, and 2019), presented biennially to coincide with the United Nations COP meetings. I highlight my partnership with ASU's Biodesign Institute and the School of Film, Dance, and Theatre's acting concentration students. We pair the plays with researchers from the institute to demonstrate how their research intersects with each play's themes. Lastly, another international theatre action, *After Orlando*, was in response to the Pulse night club shooting. Coproduced with Phoenix Theatre, the show featured an evening of staged short plays with several of the local theatre company's top talent, local politicians, and the survivor network Moms Demand Action.

Teaching

My competence and artistry with a specialty of teaching on equity and diversity issues have led to me becoming a senior trainer for the Fitzmaurice Institute (FI), a non-profit devoted to training, research and performance of Fitzmaurice Voicework technique. My work with the FI has impacted pedagogy and training with over three hundred teachers on six different continents. I have taught dozens of master classes internationally. I highlight these teaching artist assignments as illustrative of the ways that both my research and teaching aim to realign voice training towards a trajectory of a more complex understanding of voice and voice training that includes global perspectives (list of master classes available in my curriculum vitae). As Theatre faculty, I teach a variety of undergraduate courses and graduate-level courses for MFA Performance students. I developed courses in voice-overs, singing for the actor, college teaching voice, pro-casting, and acting concentration for stage and screen seminars. Since 2013, I have coordinated, to significant growth (3 to 38 majors), the acting concentration for stage and screen. As coordinator, I helped develop curriculum, managed budgets, and helped build both a guest artist series and acting

internships with numerous professional theatres. I have also served as a mentor to successful voice teachers now placed in academic positions, thereby significantly impacting the field. Including former students, Assistant Professor Adriano Cabral (University of Nevada), Associate Teacher Sara Schwabe (Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Arts), and Assistant Professor Elisa Gonzalez (Millikin College). Gonzalez, my most recent mentee, was the recipient of the ASU Faculty Women's Association Outstanding graduate award. Her thesis, *La Casa de Inez: Investigating History, Voice, and Memory through Embodied, Site-Specific Storytelling* (2017), focused on voice and Chicana identity and is now published (Taylor and Francis, 2018). Since tenure, I have advised over thirty-five undergraduate capstones and Barret Honor's theses, my student evaluations and positive reviews reflect my commitment to teaching and excellence.

Service

Internationally, I serve on the board of two of the most influential organizations in my field: VASTA and Fitzmaurice Institute. I am on the board of Voice and Speech Trainers Association (VASTA, 2017-2020), an

international association with over 620 members. I was the inaugural recipient of the VASTA Outstanding Service to the Profession award (2017). I've gladly served VASTA as conference director or co-director for five of the organization's national and international conferences—most recently, VASTA ASIA (2017). I am also a core editorial board reviewer for the Voice and Speech Review. I serve on the main advisory board for the Fitzmaurice Institute, advising in areas of diversity and inclusion and serving as co-conference director for the Fitzmaurice Freedom and Focus conferences most recently with Toi Whakaari School of Drama in Wellington, New Zealand. During the VASTA and FI international conferences, I am required to work in multiple languages to negotiate contracts, persuade the public to attend, and ensure that programming goes smoothly. Nationally and internationally, I am asked to review productions, offer recommendations for tenure cases, and mentor early career professionals and review grant applications (National Endowment of the Arts). My commitment to the region includes attending, reviewing, and judging acting and productions for Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. I was elected and serve on two university-wide committees. I am on the board as faculty liaison for the Chicano/Latino/Faculty/Staff Association and I proudly serve on

the Committee for Academic Freedom and Tenure. The bulk of my service to our department has been as a member of the personnel committee - reviewing annual portfolios, promotion and tenure and sabbatical cases, as well as annual observation and review of teaching for faculty. As part of the performance faculty, I have served as chair and on search committees for new hires and degree and curriculum revision.

Goals/Future Directions

I am dedicated to the vision of the Herberger Institute Design and the Art's mission of access, diversity, equity and inclusion. Embracing the complexity of these issues, including decolonization practices so that they are lived, practiced, analyzed, and critiqued, are imperative to being faculty at the New American University. To that end, I have received advanced training with Undoing Racism: The Peoples Institute for Survival and Beyond, Arts Equity, and I have applied to be part of the dean's core equity team. I commit to creative research and pedagogy that expands the field, impacts the lives of others, and inspires action in an ever evolving world.