

NAOMI IIZUKA'S

POLAROID STORIES

DIRECTED BY MELISSA CHALSMA



THEATRE
of ARTS
HOLLYWOOD

MAY 12-22, 2022

The Dorie Theatre
6472 Santa Monica Blvd. • Hollywood CA



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Welcome to *POLAROID STORIES*.

Working with TOA's students is exciting and inspiring. Watching young people from across the country and the globe come together to build an ensemble—a theater family—is a testament to the human capacity to build meaningful relationships through communication, empathy, and shared commitment. Naomi Iizuka's bold, poetic play, *Polaroid Stories* felt like the perfect play for this group of young artists. The characters in the play (like the actors) are young, contemporary people that inhabit a world that is complex and often scary.

The play itself is a vision of the chaotic and confusing world that rises up when support systems fail. All the young characters are living on the streets. The action of the play switches vertiginously between the present, a hazy past, and the interior thoughts of the characters. Its timeline is deliberately blurry, sending the audience headlong into the disorienting world of the play.

Ms. Iizuka based this text on interviews of real young people living in the same circumstances as the characters. The play reflects their bleak reality, ability to make deep connections, and the way they can create their own families through a complicated web of relationships. They love each other profoundly and hurt each other deeply.

The play is also loosely based on Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, the compendium of ancient Greek myths from the 8th century. Through the transpositional alchemy of playwriting, the streets can become a sort of underworld, and the characters can create themselves as gods and mortals living lives writ large, full of pathos and grand importance. And although it may feel easy to dismiss such bold dreams, what is mythology but a human attempt to create meaning out of the chaotic jumble of events we call our lives? The characters of this play, like all of us, are searching for a way through the labyrinth of their existence, forever hitting dead ends and setbacks, continuing to seek a path until they no longer can. *Polaroid Stories* reminds us (as all myths do) that however heavy our lives may be, there are still occasional moments of grace. Gaze up at a cloudy night sky long enough, and you will see a distant star—flickering dimly, calling out to be seen.

– Melissa Chalsma, Director

Melissa Chalsma is co-founder and Artistic Director of Independent Shakespeare Co. (ISC). Under her leadership, ISC developed the Griffith Park Free Shakespeare Festival, which has grown into the largest theater event of its kind in Los Angeles. ISC's admission-free summer events attract the biggest, most diverse classical theater audience in Los Angeles.

As an educator, Melissa has taught at California State University Northridge, Pepperdine University, and Moorpark College. She has created curricula for students from elementary school through university, and has also worked as a private vocal and dialogue coach.

Melissa has directed many Shakespeare plays, works by Samuel Beckett, the Western premiere of Miyazawa Akio's *Hinemi*, and numerous new plays. She collaborated on the book and lyrics of two musicals, *Anita Berber is Dead!* and *Red Barn*.

She began her career in the theater as an actress, and has performed in theaters across the country, on Broadway (including the American premiere of Harold Pinter's *Moonlight*), and in the UK. Melissa received her MFA from The Professional Theatre Training Program at the University of Delaware.



POLAROID STORIES

A spellbinding tale of young people pushed to society's fringe, Naomi Iizuka's *Polaroid Stories* blends classical mythology and real life stories told by street kids whose lives are continually threatened, devalued and effaced. Inspired in part by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *Polaroid Stories* is set on a gritty urban industrial no-man's land where runaways seek camaraderie, refuge and escape. Informed by interviews with actual homeless youth, *Polaroid Stories* conveys a whirlwind of psychic disturbance, confusion and longing. Like their mythic counterparts, these modern-day mortals are engulfed by needs that burn and consume. Their language mixes poetry and profanity, imbuing the play with lyricism and great theatrical force.

Written by Naomi Iizuka
Directed by Melissa Chalsma

Executive Producer: David Conolly
Lighting Design: Bosco Flanagan
Set Design: Natalie Morales
Sound Design: David Melville
Stage Manager/Asst. Director: Dora Zulin
Violence Choreographer: Edgar Landa
Costume Mentor: Ann Closs-Farley
Vocal Coach: Paul Wagar
Production Support: Reece Cross & Juan de la Rosa
Key Art: John A. Wooden

THE CAST



Victor M. Frausto – D

Victor is an Actor, Artist and Awesome. He was born in Zacatecas, Mexico and grew up in Northeast of Los Angeles, California. He wants to be a professional actor to tell stories and to help people see life differently.



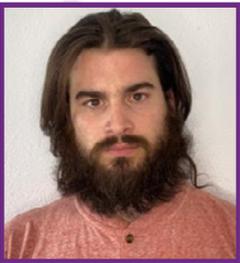
Deiatra Mizell – Echo

Deiatra is a Los Angeles native and currently enrolled in her second term at Theatre of Arts. She loves acting because it is fun and she's still growing and learning new things every day.



Taylor Holder – Eurydice

Born in Boston and raised in Burbank, Taylor is a 5th term student at Theatre Of Arts. This is her second TOA play. She is very excited to perform for you tonight and hopes you enjoy the show!



Danny Pett – G

Danny is originally from LaGrange, Illinois. He is currently in his 6th term at Theatre of Arts, and is hungry to break into the industry.



Aaron Rife – Narcissus

Aaron appeared in productions at his hometown high school, and is grateful for the opportunity to develop his craft in this, his second TOA play. He thanks the cast & crew, and hopes you enjoy the show!



Kendrick Denose – Orpheus

Kendrick is a Haitian American raised near Boston. Currently in his last term at TOA, he's extremely excited for what comes next. This is his first time performing on stage. He hopes you enjoy the show.

THE CAST (Cont'd)



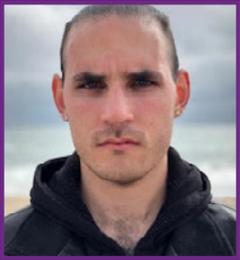
Marlene Ramirez – Persephone

Marlene was born and raised in Los Angeles. She pursued acting right after high school. She is currently in her fourth term at Theatre of Arts.



Mikalea Murkett – Philomel

Born and raised in Saint Louis, Missouri, Mikalea has performed in shows such as *Footloose*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *West Side Story*, and *Lil Abner*. Philomel's story is very close and personal to her, and she hopes you will love the character as much as she does.



Andrew Sirko – Skinhead Boy

Sirko is Italian, Czechoslovakian, and Ukrainian. He was born and raised in Los Angeles. He is currently enrolled in his second term at Theatre Of Arts. This is his first play. He is excited to share this amazing play with you and he hopes you enjoy it as much as he does.



Polina Vasylenko – Skinhead Girl

Polina is from Ukraine and in her 3rd term at Theatre of Arts. This is her very first play so she hopes you'll enjoy her character!



Sarah Fanous – Understudy

Sarah is an Actress, Dancer and Singer from Winnipeg Manitoba, Canada. She's appeared in plays in Canada and this is her second TOA show. Sarah is in her sixth and final term at Theatre of Arts, and would like to thank everyone involved for making this possible.

THEATRE OF ARTS

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

Welcome to Theatre of Arts. We are the longest-running and most storied drama conservatory in Los Angeles – in continuous operation since 1927. We offer a rigorous, accredited two-year degree program to prepare acting students for careers in theatre, film, TV and media.

In small, intensive classes, our world-class faculty of working Hollywood professionals guide students through a process of professional and personal development to render highly skilled performers who contribute original, creative and effective voices to the entertainment industry. Learn more @ toa.edu.

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By Popular Demand: Theatre of Arts now offers intensive deep-dive workshop courses and seminars a la carte, including cutting-edge subjects of special relevance to 21st century actors.



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