



**THE  
UN TRANSLATABLE SECRETS  
OF NIKKI CORONA**

**STUDY GUIDE**

GEFFEN  
**PLAYHOUSE**

THE  
UN TRANSLATABLE SECRETS  
OF **NIKKI CORONA**

WORLD PREMIERE IN THE  
GIL CATES THEATER AT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE  
**SEPTEMBER 4 - OCTOBER 7, 2018**

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Amy Levinson, Rachel Weigardt-Egel, Brian Dunning, Wendell Pascual, Mel Yonzon,  
Scott Kriloff, Ellen Catania, Jessica Brusilow Rollins and Carolyn Marie Wright.

STUDY GUIDE WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY

**Jennifer Zakkai**

This publication is to be used for educational purposes only.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

## SECTION 1

### **ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION**

PRODUCTION & CAST CREDITS.....	4
PLAY SYNOPSIS.....	5
ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHIES .....	5

## SECTION 2

### **THEMES & TOPICS**

A HERO'S QUEST .....	6
THE OTHER SIDE.....	8
BALANCING KARMA.....	10
A MAGICAL JOURNEY .....	11

## SECTION 3

### **PERSONNEL PROFILE**

AN INTERVIEW WITH MEL YONZON, SUPERVISING FRONT OF HOUSE MANAGER.....	12
--	----

## SECTION 4

<b>AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>14</b>

## SECTION 5

<b>RESOURCES.....</b>	<b>15</b>
-----------------------	-----------

SECTION 1

# ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION



## THE UNTRANSLATABLE SECRETS OF NIKKI CORONA

WRITTEN BY

**José Rivera**

DIRECTED BY

**Jo Bonney**

SCENIC DESIGNER

**Myung Hee Cho**

COSTUME DESIGNER

**Stephanie Kerley Schwartz**

LIGHTING DESIGNER

**Lap Chi Chu**

SOUND DESIGNER

**Cricket S. Myers**

PROJECTION DESIGNER

**Hana S. Kim**

DRAMATURG

**Rachel Wiegardt-Egel**

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER

**Ross Jackson**

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

**Julie Ann Renfro**

CASTING DIRECTOR

**Phyllis Schuringa, CSA**



**Cate Scott Campbell**

as Maren / Lisandra



**Ricardo Chavira**

as Orlando



**Zilah Mendoza**

as Noelle / Paloma / Bobbi / Maria Sol



**Onahoua Rodriguez**

as Abril / Nikki



**Juan Francisco Villa**

as Manny / Priest / Eldon / Bernardo / Felipe

# SYNOPSIS

Nikki Corona, who has just suffered the loss of her identical twin sister Abril, is meeting with Maren, the owner of a business that seeks to help the living communicate with the dead. Maren contracts people close to death to serve as Travelers and deliver messages to loved ones once they have crossed over to the “Other Side.” Feeling guilty because she ignored her troubled sister’s calls, Nikki wants to share a secret with her that might have prevented her from committing suicide. Maren arranges a meeting with Orlando, who is very ill and promises to deliver her message to Abril. Once he passes on, he enters a magical world in which he is returned to full health, animals are considered wise and vivid characters are making amends for their harmful actions while alive. Inspired by his feelings for Nikki to persist in his quest to find Abril, Orlando is prompted by encounters in this realm to reflect on the truth of family narratives, confront his flaws, and be true to his word.

**SETTING** Here and There

**TIME** The Present

**RUNNING TIME** 2 hours, including one 15 minute intermission

**PERFORMANCE NOTES** Characters use profanity; a character’s suicide launches the action of the play; there are oblique references to sex.

# ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHIES



**JOSÉ RIVERA** (Playwright)

The first Puerto Rican screenwriter to be nominated for an Academy Award, for *The Motorcycle Diaries*, Rivera is also the author of 26 full-length plays including the Obie Award-winning *Marisol* and *References to Salvador Dalí Make Me Hot*, both produced at the Public Theater, New York. Other plays include *Cloud Tectonics* (Playwrights Horizons), *School of the Americas* (Public Theater), *The Maids* (INTAR), *Adoration of the Old Woman* (INTAR), *Massacre (Sing to Your Children)* (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater), *Brainpeople* (ACT, San Francisco), *Sonnets for an Old Century* (Barrow Group), *Another Word for Beauty* (Goodman Theatre), *Boleros for the Disenchanted* (Yale Repertory Theatre), *The Street of the Sun* (Mark Taper Forum), *Sueño* (Manhattan Class Company) and *Lovesong (Imperfect)* (Chaskis Theatre, London). Screenplays include *On the Road*, *The 33*, *Trade*, *Letters to Juliet* and *A Thousand Miles to Freedom*. Rivera co-created and produced the NBC series *Eerie, Indiana*, and has written pilots for HBO, TNT and Showtime. Awards include a Fulbright Arts Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts grant, a McKnight Fellowship, a Rockefeller Grant, a Whiting Foundation Award and New York Council for the Arts grant. Rivera has mentored the Sundance Screenwriting Lab in Utah, Jordan and India, and leads the New York-based Writers Group.



**JO BONNEY** (Director)

Jo Bonney has directed the premieres of productions including Lynn Nottage’s *Mlima’s Tale*; Martyna Majok’s *Cost of Living*; Suzan-Lori Parks’ *Father Comes Home from the Wars*; Hammaad Chaudry’s *An Ordinary Muslim*; John Pollono’s *Rules of Seconds*; Neil LaBute’s *Fat Pig*, *The Break of Noon* and *Miss Julie*; David Rabe’s *An Early History of Fire*; Paul Lucas’ *Trans Scripts*; Eve Ensler’s *Emotional Creature*; Lynn Nottage’s *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* (Drama Desk & Lucille Lortel nominations for Best Director); Culture Clash’s *American Night*; Naomi Wallace’s *The Hard Weather Boating Party* and *Fever Chart*; Michael Weller’s *Beast*; Alan Ball’s *All That I Will Ever Be*; José Rivera’s *Adoration of the Old Woman* and *References to Salvador Dalí Make Me Hot*; Will Power’s *The Seven* (Lucille Lortel Best Musical); Darci Picoult’s *Lil’s 90th*; Christopher Shinn’s *On the Mountain*; Universes’ *Slanguage/Universes*; Diana Son’s *Stop Kiss* and Anna Deavere Smith’s *House Arrest*; Jessica Goldberg’s *Good Thing*; Danny Hoch’s *Some People and Jails*, *Hospitals & Hip-Hop*; Eric Bogosian’s *Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll*; *Pounding Nails in the Floor with My Forehead* and *Humpty Dumpty*, among others. In addition, she has directed Suzan-Lori Parks’ *Fucking A*; John Pollono’s *Small Engine Repair* and *Lost Girls*; Lanford Wilson’s *The Mound Builders*; Nilo Cruz’s *Anna in the Tropics*; Caryl Churchill’s *Top Girls*; Lanford Wilson’s *Fifth of July* (Lucille Lortel Best Revival); Charles Fuller’s *A Soldier’s Play* and Lisa Loomer’s *Living Out*. Bonney is the recipient of an Obie Award for Sustained Excellence of Direction, a Lilly Award, as well as an Audelco Award. She is also the editor of *Extreme Exposure: An Anthology of Solo Performance Texts from the Twentieth Century*.

## SECTION 2

# THEMES & TOPICS

## A HERO'S QUEST

### QUEST (noun)

The act or an instance of seeking or pursuing something; a search (thefreedictionary.com)

### EPIC (noun)

An epic is a long, often book-length, narrative in verse form that retells the heroic journey of a single person, or group of persons. Elements that typically distinguish epics include superhuman deeds, fabulous adventures, highly stylized language, and a blending of lyrical and dramatic traditions. (poets.org)

### SOURCES

[tinyurl.com/BrittanicaHero](http://tinyurl.com/BrittanicaHero)

[tinyurl.com/BrittanicaGreekMyth](http://tinyurl.com/BrittanicaGreekMyth)

[tinyurl.com/BrittanicaOrpheus](http://tinyurl.com/BrittanicaOrpheus)

[tinyurl.com/WikiQuest](http://tinyurl.com/WikiQuest)

[tinyurl.com/BrittanicaOdyssey](http://tinyurl.com/BrittanicaOdyssey)

Cavendish, Richard and Ling, Trevor O., editors. *Mythology: An Illustrated History*. Rizzoli, 1980.

### PHOTO CREDIT

Pixabay/PD



In *The Untranslatable Secrets of Nikki Corona*, Orlando goes into the Afterlife to deliver a message to Nikki's twin sister Abril. Along the way, he encounters deceased people from his life and must choose whether to stay with them or continue on. By its end, the journey has inspired him to grow as a person. In these ways, his story aligns with a "hero's quest," a plot device embedded in myths and fiction across all cultures, in which the male or female main character of the story pursues a goal, such as finding a significant object or person, overcomes difficult challenges along the way, and is changed internally.

**Mythical Heroes:** The term "hero" often conjures up a person who possesses extraordinary qualities, such as great bravery or powerful physical skills. In Western culture, this notion has its origins in ancient Greek myths. While many myths were about the Greek gods, who had human as well as supernatural traits, they also described the exploits of *heroes*, often warriors with high levels of strength, talent and courage, who were challenged in extreme ways. One of the most well known Greek myths is Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey* (675-725 B.C.), about Odysseus, who spends ten years making his way back from the Trojan War to his home and his wife, as internal and external forces keep impeding his journey.

Rivera's play draws on the story of Greek hero Orpheus to shape the setting and inform the interactions among characters.

In the myth, Orpheus marries Eurydice, who is killed by snakebite and goes to the Underworld. Orpheus uses his "superhuman musical skills" to make his way through the Underworld in search of her. The God of the Underworld is so impressed with his gifts he allows him to lead Eurydice up into the world of the living, as long as neither looks back. Just as they are about to emerge into sunlight, Orpheus turns around to make sure Eurydice is there, and loses her forever.

In Rivera's play, Maren has a business — *A Better Orpheus* — that sends those who have just died into the Afterlife to give messages to the loved ones of people who are still alive. Nikki, who happens to be a teacher of classical Greek and Roman

literature, wonders about the title of Maren’s business. In discussing it, Maren critiques Orpheus for not carrying out his part of the agreement. In response, Nikki expresses her empathy for Orpheus — a quality that likely inspires Orlando in his quest.

MAREN

Yes he went to Hades with one simple mission. To bring back his beloved. To trust the God of the Underworld enough to not look back. But he couldn’t do it.

NIKKI

Hard to trust. Even under the best circumstances.

MAREN

But a promise is a promise, a deal is a deal.

NIKKI

Can you imagine what he must’ve *felt*? With his beloved so close? The living world just two steps away? And he can almost *smell* her. The mint in her hair. The sweat under her arms. Arousing him. Then hear the sound of doves. The early peach-colored light of the forest. He knew he would love her that night. And fill her body with life. But then he remembers what a tricky [expletive] the God of the Underworld can be. So he turns around.

According to Richard Cavendish, an editor of *Mythology: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Rizzoli, 1980), myths “are part of the fabric of human life, expressing beliefs, moulding behavior and justifying institutions, customs, and values.” They both reflect and explain the world, and instruct human beings how to function within it. Rivera highlights a lesson from the myth of Orpheus when Nikki later considers backing down from having Orlando search for her sister, and Maren urges, “Don’t be like Orpheus, Nikki. Don’t look back now and screw everything up!”

**Contemporary Heroes:** Over time, naturalistic stories that reflect characters, settings and events we are familiar with in real life have overtaken the place of myths in our lives. The term “hero” often refers to the “protagonist,” or lead character, of a story. Certain elements remain the same: there is often a quest, challenges to overcome, and, usually, transformation. The focus, however, is not on the characters’ outstanding qualities, but on their flaws and complexity, which are often the obstacles to their progress. As much as Rivera has invoked mythical qualities in the world of his play, his characters brim with human vitality, edginess and humor. Orlando is a life-loving, charismatic man, riddled with shame, who has not been reliable with others — especially the women in his life. Though mortally ill physically, his bold spirit and feelings for Nikki propel him into the Afterlife, where he has opportunities to make peace with relationships that if left unresolved, threaten to trap him in unhappiness — for eternity.

## DISCUSSION POINT

What heroes have you known in your life? How did they handle challenges? What were their most striking attributes?

## THE OTHER SIDE

**SOUL** (noun)

1: the immaterial essence, animating principle, or actuating cause of an individual life; 5: the moral and emotional nature of human beings  
(merriam-webster.com)

**SUICIDE**

Depression and untreated trauma can lead to feeling there is no way out of deep emotional pain except through suicide. Impulses to suddenly take one's life can erupt during an emotional crisis, or while under the influence of mind-altering substances. In *impulsive suicides*, as opposed to those carefully planned, the person can be ambivalent, wanting to end the pain and at the same time not wanting to die. Intervention when a person is in this state can stop the suicide. **(If you or someone you know has had thoughts of harming themselves or taking their own life, get help.** The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) provides 24/7, free, confidential support for people in distress.)

**PHOTO CREDIT**

Pixabay/PD



All human beings live, knowing there is an end. One day, the person we know ourselves to be will exist no more — at least physically. Yet throughout history and across cultures, religious belief systems and metaphysical practices have proposed that our souls continue to live on, even after our hearts, brains, and cells shut down.

**The Afterlife in Religions:** In Ancient Egypt, death was considered a pause on the way to immortality. While alive, people aimed to live virtuous lives and engaged in rituals to please the gods who could usher them into the Afterlife. After death, their bodies were mummified and they were buried with items such as food, since they believed they'd need them in the Afterlife. After journeying through a dangerous Underworld, they arrived at the Hall of Osiris (a god) to be judged. Their hearts were placed on one side of a scale and a feather was placed on the other. Those whose hearts were pure and light enough to balance with the feather moved on to their new, immortal lives; those whose heavy, impure hearts tipped the scales, remained in the Underworld.

Certain Asian religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, believe all beings are reincarnated, or reborn, into new bodies and lives over and over again, until they achieve the highest stage of consciousness known as Enlightenment. With each cycle, humans remember nothing from their prior lives and seek to live in ways that will continue to advance their consciousness. Followers of the Yoruba religion in Africa also aim to live a worthwhile life and expect to be reincarnated, and believe that deceased ancestors are watching over them.

Ancient Mesoamericans, the indigenous ancestors of present-day Mexicans, believed souls journeyed to the land of the dead. They also developed the tradition, celebrated throughout Latin America to this day, of creating altars and food offerings to honor the dead when they return to the land of the living, on the Day of the Dead.

In Catholicism, followers go to different places, according to the condition of their souls when they pass away. Those who have lived exemplary lives go directly to



**MAGICAL REALISM**

The surroundings, creatures and actions of characters that Orlando encounters on his journey through the Other Side reflect playwright José Rivera's use of *magical realism*—a “chiefly Latin-American narrative strategy that is characterized by the matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction (brittanica.com).” In this literary genre, magical elements are used to illuminate different dimensions of “reality.” For Rivera, the unusual rituals in which the characters engage serve as “metaphors for the psychological state of the characters (“Finding Moments of Magic,” *Geffen Playhouse Blog*, 2018).”

**SOURCES**

suicidology-online.com/pdf/SOL-2010-1-5-18.pdf

Cavendish, Richard and Ling, Trevor O., editors. *Mythology: An Illustrated History*. Rizzoli, 1980.

tinyurl.com/WikiAfterlife

tinyurl.com/Afterlife-Egypt

tinyurl.com/Smithsonian-DayofDead

tinyurl.com/Death-Physics

tinyurl.com/Brittanica-MagicReal

“Finding Moments of Magic,” *Geffen Playhouse Blog*, 2018)

Heaven to join the God embraced by Christianity as well as loved ones who have gone before them. Those who must purify themselves before ascending to Heaven end up in Purgatory. Those who have not confessed and repented their sins while alive go directly to Hell, where painful punishments await them.

**The Afterlife in the Play:** Rather than subscribe to a particular set of religious beliefs in his depiction of the Afterlife, playwright Rivera conjures up a magical place in which there are rules to follow that are both unique to the “Other Side” and similar to various religious practices.

As his stage directions describe: *A space filled with TREES: pines, palms, oaks, cactus, flowering and fruit trees. Some trees are vaguely human-shaped. Dazzling BIRDS and stately OCTOPUSES sit on and hang from branches. The light is peach-colored. Funky ambient sounds. Distant bird songs.*

In this realm, Orlando has a guide, Lisandra, who is by turns informative, bossy or indifferent to what he is going through as he tries to come to terms with being dead. Through her he learns the Octopuses are considered the “custodians of the world” and “the sacred wisdom.” They are letting Abril walk around instead of engaging in arduous, repetitive tasks, as so many others are. Lisandra also informs him the Octopuses wouldn’t let any of Maren’s Travelers deliver messages, but are allowing Orlando to find Abril.

Orlando’s brutally frank sister Noelle gives voice to the Catholic point of view about life after death. She thinks the agreement Orlando has made with Maren and Nikki is a scam and insists he concern himself with joining Jesus Christ and their mother in Heaven. Playwright Rivera conveys an opposing view of traditional religious beliefs through Orlando, who resists following the Catholic practices his sister urges him to follow before he dies, and through Lisandra, who bans any references to God and claims what Orlando learned as a Catholic was “myth.” She explains that everyone is in the Other Side to “do a job that will define our afterlife, balance our karma, enlighten us and help us move on.” His job is to tell Abril the secret Nikki asked him to share with her, and Lisandra’s job is to help him find Abril.

To create the physical features of the Other Side, Rivera expands upon what Orlando saw or heard while alive, the way we recombine fragments of what we have experienced in our daily lives to generate unusual settings and occurrences in our dreams. For example, what Nikki shares with Orlando before he dies about her concept of the Afterlife, ends up in the Other Side: “like it’s one long dream where everything is blue and nothing makes sense... And the memories of your life become *physical* things, like trees and birds, and you can play with those memories, but you have no control...”

Since it is very hard to comprehend not being alive, some believe that envisioning what happens to us after death is an expression of our deep desire to be immortal. Others point to physics and the fact that not **all** of us dies: every single molecule of electrical and chemical energy we generate on our own and in exchanges with others through looks, words and touch, is never destroyed. Though this energy dissipates, this aspect of our being does continue, as do the memories we make with those close to us. If we have loved and been loved, at the very least, we do live on in the hearts and minds of others.

**DISCUSSION POINT**

Whether you believe in an Afterlife or not, what do you imagine such a place or state might look and feel like? Why?

## BALANCING KARMA

**KARMA** (noun)

the force generated by a person's actions, held in Hinduism and Buddhism to perpetuate transmigration and in its ethical consequences to determine the nature of the person's next existences (merriam-webster.com)

**CHARACTERS  
IN THE OTHER SIDE**

**LISANDRA** — A guide for occupants of the Other Side

**BOBBI** — Orlando's first girlfriend, who publicly shamed another boy

**ELDON** — Orlando's ancestor and an esteemed conservationist of birds, who was hiding a shameful secret

**PALOMA**— Orlando's grandmother, a noted doctor in Argentina during the 1970s-80s, caught in a moral dilemma

**MARIA SOL** — his mother, an influential conservative intellectual, whom Orlando has found it hard to forgive for supporting an immoral war

**FELIPE** — Orlando's beloved brother, for whom he had to make a wrenching decision

**SOURCES**

[tinyurl.com/Wiki-Karma](http://tinyurl.com/Wiki-Karma)

**PHOTO CREDIT**

Pixabay/PD



Throughout his journey through the Other Side, Orlando encounters people he has known who are engaged in symbolic actions that reveal the harm they did while alive. In this way, Rivera is exploring *karma* — a belief in Eastern religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, that there is a causal relationship between our actions and their impact on our present and future lives, and that actions have ethical consequences. Some religions also believe that each time a person is reincarnated they have a new chance to address the “karmic debt” of their past lives.

To distinguish this belief from Christian teachings about sin, Lisandra explains, “The octopuses don’t deal with sin or punishment. Those are man-made things...What they select for Enhanced Karmic Re-balancing doesn’t have to be the most epic moment in a person’s life. It could be the smallest. A moment you violated your contract with humanity. The day you mocked a disabled lady. Lied to your child about love. Spread hatred. Caused the death of trust. Wrote a lie.”

As Orlando comes across family members and individuals who affected his life, it takes a while for him to make sense of what each is doing and feeling. Eldon, a champion of bird conservation revered in Orlando’s family, tries to cover a giant statue of a bird in feathers that are being blown off just as he sticks them on. Orlando finds out that contrary to family myth, Eldon allowed his pet cats to wipe out an island’s entire population of rare birds. Destroying hundreds of helmets with rocks is forcing his brother, Felipe, who died as a result of a motorcycle accident while not wearing a helmet, to reflect on the carelessness that led to such a hurtful loss for his family. Once these individuals, and Lisandra, feel they have learned enough, they undergo a final test, which if passed, allows them to move beyond the confines of the Other Side into what lies beyond.

Orlando not only witnesses endlessly repeated actions but also the regret and shame that have surfaced as they face up to what they did. Until this point, he has been superficially charming and irresponsible towards others. Witnessing the suffering of people in his life fills him with compassion and inspires him to stay by their side, and not run away, as he has in the past. While this is a solid first step in balancing his karma, to make things fully right he must persist in achieving the larger and more challenging goal of finding Abril, and show that he has learned how to be true to his promises.

# A MAGICAL JOURNEY

---

**Use your imagination to envision a magical “hero’s quest” and capture the journey with rich, descriptive language.**

- Assume the persona of a hero with remarkable personal and supernatural powers.
- Envision a quest.
- Describe where it will take place and whom you will encounter along the way.
- Explore the internal vulnerabilities and the external forces that will obstruct you.
- Discover how you will overcome these obstacles in real and magical ways.
- Consider how you will change internally as a result of this journey.

**Draw the setting(s) and/or a map of the journey.**



## SECTION 3

# PERSONNEL PROFILE

## AN INTERVIEW WITH MEL YONZON

---

### **What is your title and when did you join the Geffen?**

I am the Supervising Front of House Manager. I started officially working at the Geffen on August 1, 2018.

### **What are your primary responsibilities?**

My job is to create a welcoming and accessible environment with friendly and helpful Front of House staff, to assist and engage with patrons to support a positive atmosphere, and to ensure an error-free show start. I also get to flash the lights and ring the bells in the lobby!

### **In what ways does your work help ensure that patrons have a positive experience at the theater?**

Front of House team members are the face of the Geffen Playhouse during shows and events. It is our responsibility to check in with our patrons and match their specific needs. Think of it this way: many patrons will buy tickets online and never interact with a human being until they arrive at the theater. Front of House staff members are the first faces that a patron may encounter, so it is important to be approachable, helpful and kind.

### **What are some of the needs that front of house staff address?**

The Front of House staff is like the host of a party. We invite people into our house and make them feel included. We offer them Assisted Listening Devices, help them get refreshments, pass out programs and direct them to their seats.

### **What educational and professional experiences led to your job at the Geffen?**

While obtaining my BFA in Acting at University of Wisconsin-Steven's Point and St. Mary's College in London, I did an internship as a House Manager and fell in love. Some of my favorite places that I have been lucky to work for have been the North Shore Performing Arts Center, North Light Theatre and the Goodman Theatre in Chicago. House Management is a great career for people who love the arts, enjoy problem solving and find helping people rewarding.



### **What do you find most challenging about the work of a house manager?**

The most challenging thing is handling the different personalities of the patrons and the staff. Patrons and employees walk into the Geffen Playhouse with varied and specific expectations and in some cases those expectations may need to be reset. To an audience member we might need to say, "As it turns out, we do not have an omelet station; however, our cheese plate is quite tasty."

### **What are you excited about contributing and experiencing in this new setting?**

In my short time at the Geffen, I've noticed there is a real sense of "family." I look forward to focusing on creating that energy in the lobby! I am also pretty excited about February in Southern California. Get ready for a LOT of bragging to my family and friends in the Windy City. ■

## SECTION 4

# AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

Going to the theater is a unique experience, and we all need to be mindful of “audience etiquette,” or how to behave at the theater.

**The Audience’s Role:** The audience plays an essential role at the performance of a play. Without an audience, the actors are only rehearsing. Audience members’ concentrated silence and responses, such as laughing and applauding, provide energy to the actors as they bring the performance to life.

**Behaviors to Avoid:** Since the actors can hear the audience so clearly, it is important not to engage in behaviors that might disturb or distract them—and fellow audience members.

These actions include:

- Talking
- Texting
- Allowing cell phones to ring
- Taking photographs or video
- Getting up to leave before intermission or the end of the show (unless it is a true emergency)
- Eating or drinking
- Unwrapping candy or cough drops.

**Use of Social Media:** We appreciate you sharing your Geffen Playhouse experience via social media, but ask that you **do not do so inside the theater, where the use of electronic devices is prohibited.**

We recommend that you post your status **in the lobby after the performance**, and invite you to tag @GeffenPlayhouse and use #GeffenPlayhouse to share your experience and continue the conversation with us online.

**Audience Awareness Activity:** Before going to the Geffen Playhouse for the first time, compare and contrast the experience of seeing a live play with:

- going to the movies
- attending a live sporting event
- watching television.

### DISCUSSION POINT

If you were onstage performing a play, how would you want the audience to behave?

# POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Depending on the time available and your group members' interests, guide them to respond to questions selected from those suggested below. Encourage everyone to participate, while having respect for differing opinions. Individuals can share their thoughts with a partner or in a small group. Ask for several volunteers to share their groups' answers with the larger group.

- Overall, how did you feel while watching *The Untranslatable Secrets of Nikki Corona*? Engrossed? Distanced? Entertained? Bored? Conflicted? Moved? Inspired? What made you feel this way?
- At which points were you most engaged in the story? Why? At which points were you least engaged? Why? (Provide evidence from the production.)
- Did you identify or empathize with any of the characters? If so, which character(s) and why? If not, why not?
- Did experiencing this play affirm, inspire new thinking about or conflict with your beliefs about what takes place after death? If so, how?
- What was the most surprising moment in Orlando's journey?
- What role do you think "karma" plays in people's lives?
- Did the lessons Orlando learned about himself and the people in his life inspire you to reflect on your own experiences? If so, how?
- Playwright José Rivera believes magical elements can serve as metaphors for the psychological states of the characters. Which metaphor spoke most powerfully to you? What did it tell you about the character?
- What did you appreciate most about the performances by the actors? How did the actors playing multiple roles make each character distinctive?
- How did the set, costumes, props, lighting, and visuals contribute to the impact of the play?
- Would you recommend this production of *The Untranslatable Secrets of Nikki Corona* to other theatergoers? Why, or why not?

## SECTION 5

# RESOURCES

**WATCH** playwright José Rivera discuss his work, in a conversation conducted at Emory University, at [tinyurl.com/RiveraConversation](https://tinyurl.com/RiveraConversation).

---

**VISIT** the Getty Villa in Malibu to learn about ancient Greco-Roman history and art. Information about how to visit is available at [tinyurl.com/Getty-Villa-Greek-Art](https://tinyurl.com/Getty-Villa-Greek-Art).

---

**LEARN** about *magical realism* in literature by reading the works of Jorge Luis Borges (Argentina), Gabriel Garcia Márquez (Colombia) and Isabel Allende (Chile). Their short story collections and novels are available at public libraries throughout Los Angeles.

---

**WATCH** the film *Coco* to take a journey through the Land of the Dead, in which a young Mexican boy explores the story of his ancestors. (DVD is available at public library branches throughout Los Angeles; go to [tinyurl.com/LAPLCocoDVD](https://tinyurl.com/LAPLCocoDVD).)

Learn about the Mexican cultural traditions upon which the film *Coco* draws, through resources at the Los Angeles Public Library, at [tinyurl.com/LAPLDayofDead-Coco](https://tinyurl.com/LAPLDayofDead-Coco).

---

**EXPLORE** ways to “cleanse your karma” by acting with more compassion and generosity towards others and yourself, at [tinyurl.com/Steps-Karmic-Cleanse](https://tinyurl.com/Steps-Karmic-Cleanse).

---

**LEARN** about suicide prevention at SAVE (Suicide Awareness Voices of Education) at [save.org](https://save.org).

# THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS ARE MADE POSSIBLE BY THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF:

The Alec Baldwin Foundation  
AMC  
Amgen Foundation  
Annapurna Pictures  
Anonymous  
Ariel Investments  
Audi of America  
Brotman Foundation of California  
Capital Group Companies Foundation  
City National Bank  
Comcast | NBC Universal  
Creative Artists Agency  
Dwight Stuart Youth Fund  
Edgerton Foundation  
Ben B. and Joyce E. Eisenberg Foundation  
Elaine P. Wynn & Family Foundation  
Find Your Grind Foundation  
Gagosian Gallery  
Gang, Tyre, Ramer & Brown, Inc.  
The David Geffen Foundation  
George Lucas Family Foundation  
The Rosalinde & Arthur Gilbert Foundation  
Goldman Sachs  
Greater Los Angeles New Car Dealers Association  
The Adi & Jerry Greenberg Foundation  
Greenberg Glusker Fields Claman & Machtinger, LLP  
ICM Partners  
Joseph Drown Foundation  
K Period Media  
The Katie McGrath & J.J. Abrams Family Foundation  
Keyes Automotive Group  
KIND Bars  
Kissick Family Foundation  
L&N Andreas Foundation  
Lear Family Foundation  
Lionsgate  
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors  
Los Angeles City Department of Cultural Affairs  
Los Angeles County Arts Commission  
Lowell Milken Family Foundation  
Mara W. Breech Foundation  
Marilyn & Jeffrey Katzenberg Fund  
for Arts Education at the Geffen Playhouse  
Maurice Amado Foundation  
Moss Foundation  
MOCA Foundation  
Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation  
Northern Trust  
Paradigm Talent Agency  
Paramount Pictures  
Ralph M. Parsons Foundation  
Rosenthal Family Foundation  
Thomas Safran & Associates  
The Sheri & Les Biller Family Foundation  
Shay Family Foundation  
Simms/Mann Family Foundation  
Singer Family Foundation  
Smith Family Foundation  
Sondheim Foundation  
Sony Pictures Entertainment  
Steve Tisch Family Foundation  
Stone Family Foundation  
Twentieth Century Fox  
UCLA  
US Bank  
The Walt Disney Company  
Warner Bros. Entertainment  
Westfield Group  
Ziff Family Foundation

And many more!



*As of print date: August 22, 2018*