

CCAC and Theater on the Lake present  
A Showcase of Accessible Services for Theater

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Illustrated through a special staging of

# PROJECT POTENTIAL

by **Isaac Gomez**

directed by  
**Laura Alcalá Baker**

featuring  
**Erica Cruz Hernández**  
**Leslie Sophia Perez**

# PROJECT POTENTIAL

by **Isaac Gomez** directed by **Laura Alcalá Baker**

featuring

**Erica Cruz Hernández** as Belinda

**Leslie Sophia Perez** as Adeline

## SETTING

Place: An office. Time: The present.

## PRODUCTION & ACCESSIBILITY

(see individual biographies for contact)

**Rachel Arfa** (Expert User and Consultant)

**Michelle E. Benda** (Expert User and Consultant)

**Matthew Bivins** (Caption Manager and Designer)

**Lindsay Jean Drexler** (Caption Designer and Expert User)

**Beth Finke** (Expert User and Consultant)

**havalah grace** (ASL Manager)

**Charlotte “Chuck” Gruman**

(Relaxed/Sensory-Friendly Manager, Expert User and Consultant)

**Jason Harrington** (Facilitator)

**Evan Hatfield** (Producer)

**Foxhole Creative**® (Video Production)

**Gaby Labotka** (Fight Choreographer)

**Eddie Medrano** (Production Manager)

**Jack Miggins** (Audio Description Manager)

**Hillary Pearson** (Producer and Audience Experience Manager)

**Casey Peek** (Stage Manager)

**Lizzy Rangel** (ASL Interpreter for *Adeline*)

**Susan Elizabeth Rangel** (ASL Master and Interpreter for *Belinda*)

## **WORKSHOP ACCESSIBILITY**

**Cathy Rajcan** (Realtime Captioning - [info@efficiencyreporting.com](mailto:info@efficiencyreporting.com))

**Jennifer McElroy** (ASL Interpreter - [jenstalkinghands09@gmail.com](mailto:jenstalkinghands09@gmail.com))

**Leandra Williams** (ASL Interpreter - [leawms@aol.com](mailto:leawms@aol.com))

## **THEATER ON THE LAKE**

**Sarah Beals** (Production Manager)

**David Goodman-Edberg** (AV Manager)

**Angelique Grandone** (Managing Director)

**Manny Ortiz** (Technical Director)

## **SPONSORS**

**ACS Interpreting and Training Services**

(ASL Interpreter placement: [acscaptions.com](http://acscaptions.com))

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(Braille printing: [horizons-blind.org](http://horizons-blind.org))

**Steppenwolf Theatre Company**

## **COMING UP AT THEATER ON THE LAKE**

In the 2019 season, all performances at Theater on the Lake are free!

**July 16-19**

**Manual Cinema's *The End of TV***

For more information and a full event calendar, please visit

**[theaterontheLake.com](http://theaterontheLake.com)**

**Welcome**, and thank you for joining us for A Showcase of Accessibility Services for Theater, as illustrated through a staging of Isaac Gomez' *Project Potential*, directed by Laura Alcalá Baker!

In offering this live demonstration of accessibility services, our goal is to dispel some of the mystery and apprehension that often prevents organizations from making their venues and their art inclusive for people with disabilities.

While it may seem daunting, we take heart in the fact that as theater-makers in Chicago, we are already in full command of the fundamental concepts required:

- To paraphrase most (if not all) of our organizations' missions – we want to share our art with *everyone*.
- At the core of our industry is an art form that asks us to consider the experience of others.
- One of the main driving forces in our world is the team of artists and technicians who specialize in making each story accessible to an audience through the use of light, sound, staging, sight line and technology.
- Our marketing, development and audience experience teams are already committed to the act of making it possible for people to be in our venues, and for them to feel safe, relaxed and invited.

Our invitation to consider: what does it look like if we commit to applying this existing foundation of philosophy, creativity, ingenuity, collaboration and expertise to make sure we're *truly* sharing our art with everyone?

What we are offering today is not intended to represent any form of ultimate solution for providing accessibility services; rather, we're aiming to share what has worked well in our existing Chicago ecosystem – but is by no means perfect. In sharing this glimpse, we hope to demonstrate basic concepts and practices that we encourage everyone to improve upon. Because another basic value of Chicago theater?

We're better as a community.

We're glad you're here!

The Accessibility Services Showcase Team

**Laura Alcalá Baker** (she/her/hers :: Director) is a Chicago based director and casting director. She served as the Casting Director and Artistic Programs Manager at Victory Gardens Theater from 2016-2019 leading programs such as The Access Project and Directors' Inclusion Initiative. While working at B Street Theatre, CA as an Artistic Associate, she directed *Equivocation*, *The Giver*, *11:11*, and *Collapse*. Shifting her focus to new play development, Laura directed the world premiere of Isaac Gomez' *The Way She Spoke: A Docu-mythologia* (DCASE, Greenhouse Theater Center). Other select Chicago pieces include: *There is No Message in the Message*, *Shamed* (The Gift Theatre's TEN), *Project Potential* (Broken Nose Theatre's Bechdel Fest), and *Jets, Sharks, and Beckys* (Collaboraction's Peacebook Festival). Most recently, she directed the audio drama *BRAVA* by Nancy Garcia Loza (Make-Believe Association) which is available on all podcast platforms. Laura is a proud member of the Alliance of Latinx Theatre Artists and was nominated for 'Best Casting Director' at the 2018 ALTA Awards. [lauraalcalabaker@gmail.com](mailto:lauraalcalabaker@gmail.com)

**Rachel Arfa** (she/her/hers :: Expert User and Consultant) is employed as a disability rights attorney at Equip for Equality, Illinois' protection and advocacy agency that advocates for the civil and human rights of people with disabilities. By night, she can be found sitting in a Chicago theatre's audience, watching an open captioned performance or attending an event at a cultural institution. She has seen a transformation in Chicago cultural access, growing up in a Chicago that was not accessible, to offering multiple offerings in any given week. In 2012, Rachel lead Steppenwolf Theatre's outreach committee for its production of *Tribes*, where she advised on various aspects including accessibility, marketing, marketing, and outreach. Rachel is a founding Steering Committee member of the Chicago Cultural Accessibility Consortium (CCAC) and has worked with numerous Chicago area cultural institutions to increase their access to visitors with disabilities. Rachel is deaf and wears bilateral cochlear implants. [rmarfa@gmail.com](mailto:rmarfa@gmail.com)

**Michelle E. Benda** (she/her/hers :: Expert User and Consultant) is a Chicago based lighting designer and assistant lighting designer. Lighting design credits include *Utility*, *I Call My Brothers* (Interrobang Theatre Project); *Everybody* (Brown Paper Box Co.), *Hamlet* (The Gift Theatre), *The Gentleman Caller* (Raven Theatre), *Desire in a Tinier House* (Pride Films and Plays); *Collage of a Dystopian Midwest*, *Frankenstein*, (Bower Theatre Ensemble), *Failure: A Love Story* (Illinois Theatre), and *Cabaret* (No Stakes Theater Project). She has assisted lighting designers at Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, and TimeLine Theatre Company. Michelle holds

an MFA in Lighting Design and Technology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. To learn more about Michelle's work or to contact her, visit [mbendalighting.com](http://mbendalighting.com).

**Matthew Bivins** (he/him/his :: Caption Manager and Designer) is a web and software developer, actor and musician who relocated to Chicago in 2008. He and brother Evan (Bivins Brothers Creative) focus on designing and developing projects for nonprofits and other organizations for social good and are responsible for building the website for the Chicago Cultural Access Consortium ([chicagoculturalaccess.org](http://chicagoculturalaccess.org)). Matt and his wife Lindsay provide captioning for the D/deaf and hard of hearing community at Chicago theaters and other live events with their project CaptionPoint. They are in the process of filming a web series on DIY captioning and looking to expand CaptionPoint beyond Chicago in the next year. Matt is a proud member of the CCAC's Steering Committee. [matt@captionpoint.com](mailto:matt@captionpoint.com)

**Lindsay Jean Drexler** (she/her/hers :: Caption Designer / Expert User and Consultant) is a captioner and a dog groomer. She grew up here in Chicago, in Portage Park. Being deaf since shortly after birth, she spent her formative years communicating with Cued Speech, a form of hand sign that combines phonetics and lipreading. She later took several courses in American Sign Language at Northern Illinois University, where she obtained a Bachelor's in Communications. In 2016, Lindsay and her husband Matthew Bivins started CaptionPoint, a service that provides captioning for live scripted events for the D/deaf and hard of hearing. They've provided captions for nearly 50 plays for several theaters here in Chicago, including Steppenwolf, Northlight, and Court. Be on the lookout for their upcoming web series on DIY captioning! Lindsay is excited to participate in this year's Accessibility Services Showcase and looks forward to a lifetime of promoting accessibility advocacy. [ljdrexler@gmail.com](mailto:ljdrexler@gmail.com)

**Beth Finke** (she/her/hers :: Audio Description Expert User and Consultant) is a teacher and published author. Her latest book *Writing Out Loud: What a Blind Teacher Learned from Leading a Memoir Class for Seniors* chronicles the challenges and rewards of her decade-long adventure helping older adults in Chicago write their stories. She leads writing workshops every year at Northwestern University Summer Writers' Conference, speaks regularly at Printers Row Lit Fest, and appeared on the Oprah Show in a short segment about her job modeling nude for university art students before her writing career took off. She is the recipient of a Writing Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Lisagor Award she won for a story about the White

Sox on Chicago Public Radio makes her the only blind woman in America to be honored for sports broadcasting. Beth is married to Mike Knezovich. They have one grown son, Gus, and live in the Printers Row neighborhood of Chicago with Beth's Seeing Eye dog, Whitney.  
*info@bethfinke.com*

**Foxhole Creative**® (Archival Video Production) is an unparalleled creative production, artist services, and unique venue rental company. Our mission is to foster growth in our creative community and unite, inspire, and empower everyone we work with. Located in Chicago, Illinois, and Hollywood, California; we specialize in video & audio production, design, event management and activation execution.  
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**Isaac Gomez** (he/him/his :: Playwright) is a Chicago-based playwright, dramaturg and educator, originally from El Paso, Texas/Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. His plays include *La Ruta* (developed at Primary Stages, Steppenwolf Theater Company, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Goodman Theatre, and Pivot Arts); *Wally World* (Sideshow Theater Company commission); *PerKup Elkhorn* (developed at Northlight Theatre Company and Chicago Dramatists); *The Way She Spoke: A docu-mythologia* (Greenhouse Theater Center); *The Displaced* (Haven Theatre); *Throwaway Kids* (Cunningham Commission for Youth Theatre — The Theatre School at DePaul University); *The Alchemist* (Actors Theatre of Louisville acting apprentice new play commission). Other companies he's worked with include Victory Gardens Theater, American Theater Company, Teatro Vista, Definition Theater Company, Jackalope Theatre, Broken Nose Theater, Stage Left, and Something Marvelous. As dramaturg he has worked with Victory Gardens Theater, Goodman Theatre, Teatro Vista, Oracle Productions, Strange Bedfellows, and Sideshow Theater Company. He is a recipient of the Jeffry Melnick New Playwright Award at Primary Stages, the co-creative director at the Alliance of Latinx Theatre Artists in Chicago where he runs and is a participant of El Semillero: ALTA Chicago's Latino Playwrights Circle, a resident playwright at Chicago Dramatists, an artistic associate with Victory Gardens Theater, an ensemble member with Teatro Vista, an artistic associate with Pivot Arts, the artistic curator for Theater on the Lake 2017/2018, a steering committee member of the Latinx Theatre Commons (LTC) and an artistic community member at The Hypocrites. He is a professional lecturer at The Theatre School at DePaul University.

**havalah grace** (they/them/theirs or ze/hir/hirs :: ASL Manager) is an actor who found their way into accessibility because they kept pestering companies to make the shows they were in accessible to their friends.

Since then, Havalah has served as the Co-Director of Accessibility for Chicago Deaf Art, Director of Accessibility for Oracle Productions, recruits ASL volunteers for Victory Gardens, and coordinates all the ASL performances at Steppenwolf Theatre Company. They have also worked on access teams for Lollapalooza (3 years running), The Women's March (3 years running), Lori Lightfoot's election night, and Lori Lightfoot's inauguration. Havalah recently graduated from Columbia College Chicago this May with a second bachelor's degree in ASL-English Interpretation and has joined the ranks of professional interpreters with their provisional license. *havalahhgrace@gmail.com*

**Charlotte “Chuck” Gruman** (she/her/hers :: RSF Manager, Expert User and Consultant) is an Arts Manager and Activist who specializes in sensory-friendly programming. With a degree from Columbia College in International Arts Management and a specialization in Creative Industries, she is normalizing sensory integration techniques by fabricating weighted blankets and toys which help audience members who may have issues with anxiety or sitting still, as well as 3D printing braille and floor plans for spaces that are hoping to update their visual access programming. As a person with Sensory Processing Disorder, her mission is to combine her stage and production management experience to consult and create relaxed / sensory-friendly programming for cultural events and teach those who are interested in branching out. After working with Steppenwolf, The Second City, The House Theater and the Goodman Theater, her hope is to continue training and educating people on the importance of cultural accessibility. Upcoming projects include *The Music Man* at the Goodman Theater, as well as being a part of the ADA Access team at Lollapalooza. *grumanck@gmail.com*

**Jason Harrington** (he/him/his :: Facilitator) is the education outreach manager at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where he manages education programs serving 40,000 students and about 450 schools each year, as well as the access programs for patrons with disabilities. He is the resident audio describer at CST, having audio described every production since 2013. He's also provided audio description for The Goodman Theatre, Steep Theatre, Black Ensemble Theater, and Chimera Ensemble. He served as a founding steering committee member for CCAC and is a board member of Up and Coming Theatre, a community theater out of the northwest suburbs. Back in his home state, Jason earned a BFA in theater from The University of Rhode Island. *jharrington@chicagoshakes.com*

**Evan Hatfield** (he/him/his :: Producer) is a consultant and a steering committee member and founding co-chair (2013 to 2018) of the Chicago



Cultural Accessibility Consortium (CCAC). From 2005 to 2019, he worked at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, where he created the position of Director of Audience Experience and implemented accessibility initiatives that included relaxed/sensory-friendly programming, touch tours, city-wide audio description trainings, open captioning, all-gender restrooms and the installation of induction hearing loops. He consults with organizations and events on accessibility programming and services and has presented in various cities and university settings. While he was a co-chair alongside Christena Gunther and Lynn Walsh, CCAC was acknowledged with the Raymond R. Snyder Commitment to the Arts Award from Lifeline Theatre Company (2016) and an Emerging Leaders Award from The John F. Kennedy Center (2015). In 2012, Evan was honored as a recipient of the Actors' Equity Kathryn V. Lamkey Award for dedication to equal opportunity. [evan@evanhatfield.net](mailto:evan@evanhatfield.net)

**Erica Cruz Hernández** (she/her/hers :: *Belinda*) is an ensemble member with Chicago's Spanish speaking Aguijón Theater Company which is celebrating 30 years of producing Spanish-language and bilingual works that promote diversity by challenging and inspiring its audiences to surmount idiomatic barriers and cross cultural boundaries. Her previous credits with Aguijón include *La Chunga*, *Querido Voyeur*, *Antígona*, and the bilingual production of *Soldaderas* for the Goodman Theatre's Latino Theatre Festival and the Festival de Mujeres en Escena por la Paz in Bogotá, Colombia. She's also participated in the New Harmony Project writers' conference as an actor developing a new play by Kirk Lynn, and she just wrapped up her first year at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she is pursuing an MFA and was most recently seen in the world premiere of *Because I Am Your Queen*, a new devised play where she collaborated with writer Mina Samuels and Tectonic Theater Project's Barbara Pitts McAdams using Moment Work. You can also catch her in the feature film *En Algun Lugar (A Place To Be)*, available on Amazon. [erica.hernand@gmail.com](mailto:erica.hernand@gmail.com)

**Gaby Labotka** (she/her/hers or anything respectful :: Fight Choreographer) is a multidisciplinary artist whose recent choreography credits include *Desire in a Tinier House* (Pride Films & Plays); *In the Blood* (Red Tape Theatre); *On Clover Road* (American Blues Theater); *La Ruta* (Steppenwolf); *Hamlet* (The Gift); and *A Story Told in Seven Fights* (Neo-Futurists. ALTA Award). Gaby is a Certified Intimacy Director with Intimacy Directors International, an Advanced Actor Combatant with the Society of American Fight Directors, and a proud member of the Alliance of Latinx Theatre Artists (ALTA). [gabylabotka.com](mailto:gabylabotka.com) :: [gaby.labotka@gmail.com](mailto:gaby.labotka@gmail.com) :: @theatre\_warrior  
Keep Smiling!

**Eddie Medrano** (he/him/his :: Production Manager) Originally from El Paso, Texas, Eddie moved to Chicago to pursue a career in the live music industry. For the past decade, he has navigated the local music community, booking various clubs and festivals throughout the city. Hoping to explore new sectors in the arts, he joined CHF in January of 2018, where he oversees the production of roughly 120 events in 40 different venues throughout the year. [eddie@chicagohumanities.org](mailto:eddie@chicagohumanities.org)

**Jack Miggins** (he/him/his :: Audio Description Manager) is an audio describer, writer, and actor around Chicago. He learned to audio describe while working Front of House at Steppenwolf, and has also described at The Goodman, Jackalope, Timeline, The Neo-Futurists, and other theaters around town. He's glad to be here to help demystify the AD process, and to let you know it's not as scary as it looks. [jackmiggins@gmail.com](mailto:jackmiggins@gmail.com)

**Hillary Pearson** (she/her/hers :: Producer and Audience Experience Manager) is the Manager of Operations and Accessibility Services at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, a non-profit rental facility that is home to 30+ Chicago-based resident companies, along with being a venue with its own presenting series. Hillary is also a steering committee member of the Chicago Cultural Accessibility Consortium and has had the privilege to attend the Kennedy Center Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability conference (aka LEAD – it's great, you should go!). At the Harris, Hillary works both internally and externally to inform staff and renters on accessibility features in-house and share further resources on accessibility, maintain and update access & inclusion training initiatives for all users of the space, and help navigate conversations between service providers and rental companies. Hillary has both presented and co-coordinated several CCAC Professional Development workshops geared around patron experience and customer service practices and will be presenting a workshop at the national LEAD conference in Denver this coming August. [hpearson@chicagoculturalaccess.org](mailto:hpearson@chicagoculturalaccess.org)

**Casey Peek** (she/her/hers :: Stage Manager) is the Patron Services Manager for The Joffrey Ballet and a sometimes stage manager. She has a passion for making the arts accessible to everyone and is very excited to be a part of this project showcasing how important accessibility is and how easily it can be implemented into a theatrical performance. Some of her stage management credits include work with The Hypocrites, Silk Road Rising, Strawdog Theatre Company, the House Theatre of Chicago, American Theatre Company's CORE program, and Mary-Arrchie Theatre Company. Thanks to CCAC for helping Chicago be accessible! [Cipeek89@gmail.com](mailto:Cipeek89@gmail.com)

**Leslie Sophia Perez** (she/her/hers :: *Adeline*) has just completed her first year at The Theatre School at DePaul University as an Acting major. She has been performing on stage since she was 9. Leslie was part of the Chorus, A Capella and musical theater at her high school. Most recently other credits include TV (*Chicago PD*), Steppenwolf Theatre: workshop *La Ruta*, *American Blues*, and the web series *Es Un Show*. This summer Leslie will be part of the *I'm Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* workshop at Steppenwolf Theatre. [Lesla101@gmail.com](mailto:Lesla101@gmail.com)

**Lizzy Rangel** (she/her/hers :: ASL Interpreter for *Adeline*) is a CODA (Child of Deaf Adult) freelance interpreter based in Chicago, Illinois. She received her B.A. in Interpreting from Columbia College, Chicago and currently holds an Illinois Intermediate License. She works continuously in the community around Chicagoland and has been fortunate enough to interpret outside of Illinois providing ASL/English interpretations through members of the Deaf community and Deaf Blind community. One of her life goals is to someday sponsor a child's education in Africa. Something that she loves to do is interpret theater with historical/cultural ties and roots. Lizzy's daily aspiration is to keep learning about the world through perspectives and conversations from people of all backgrounds; always keeping quality accessibility a top priority. She was a performance interpreter for Isaac Gomez' *La Ruta* at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, and is glad to be interpreting for another one of his plays with *Project Potential!* [Lizzyarangel@gmail.com](mailto:Lizzyarangel@gmail.com)

**Susan Elizabeth Rangel** (she/her/hers :: M.A., CDI, QMHI :: ASL Master and Interpreter for *Belinda*) has directed and coordinated over twenty-five interpreted productions at Goodman Theatre and others. Being the nation's only Latina Certified Deaf Interpreter compelled her to become the founder and owner of Faith Interpreting Services ([www.faithinterpreting.wixsite.com](http://www.faithinterpreting.wixsite.com)). Aside from matching interpreters to provide the best theatrical experiences for Deaf audiences, she also enjoys interpreting for theatrical productions. Some of her favorites include *Disgraced* at Goodman, *Jane in the Jungle* at Merle Reskin Theatre, and *La Ruta* at Steppenwolf. She was also a performer in the production of *Deaf Sabor*. Additionally, she has graced the stage in interpreted musical performances for the nationwide Youth and Young Adult V Encuentro. Susan Elizabeth contracts with various companies to provide ASL consultations, mentoring, text and video translations. [susanelizabethr@yahoo.com](mailto:susanelizabethr@yahoo.com)

## About CCAC

Chicago Cultural Accessibility Consortium (CCAC) believes everyone deserves access to Chicago's rich arts and culture. Our mission is to empower Chicago's cultural spaces to become more accessible to visitors with disabilities.

CCAC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and is volunteer-run. Through monthly professional development workshops, our Access Calendar, and an active list-serv, and an equipment loan program, CCAC facilitates a dynamic community of cultural administrators and visitors with disabilities striving to advance accessibility and inclusion across the Chicago region's vast cultural spaces. [chicagoculturalaccess.org](http://chicagoculturalaccess.org)

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The Equipment Loan Program is administered by Steppenwolf Theatre Company with major funding provided by the Michael and Mona Heath Fund. [equip@chicagoculturalaccess.org](mailto:equip@chicagoculturalaccess.org)

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**Chicago Access Calendar**  
[chicagoculturalaccess.org/calendar](http://chicagoculturalaccess.org/calendar)

For a full calendar of accessible cultural events in the Chicago area, visit [chicagoculturalaccess.org/calendar](http://chicagoculturalaccess.org/calendar)