

The Autry Museum of the American West and Native Voices presents

32ND FESTIVAL OF NEW PLAYS

**AUTRY
MUSEUM**
OF THE AMERICAN WEST

**SATURDAY, JUNE 6
SUNDAY, JUNE 7**

**LA JOLLA
PLAYHOUSE**

SATURDAY, JUNE 27



NATIVE VOICES

Welcome to Native Voices' 32nd Annual Festival of New Plays. Each year, this festival reminds me why we do what we do. It is a space where new stories take their first breath, where our playwrights invite us into worlds that are at once deeply specific and profoundly universal. This year, we are honored to share two striking works: *Medea's Masquerade* by Frances Koncan and *Smoke* by Drew Woodson.

At first glance, these plays could not feel more different. One unfolds inside an isolated prairie castle on the verge of a new millennium; the other, in a modest home in Clear Lake as wildfire smoke closes in. One is heightened, surreal, and theatrical; the other is grounded, intimate, and quietly devastating. And yet, as so often happens in this festival, an unexpected conversation emerges between them. Both plays ask: *What are we trying to hold together when everything around us is falling apart?*

In *Medea's Masquerade*, a young journalist seeks truth, identity, and belonging in a space where nothing is quite what it seems. Masks, both literal and metaphorical, blur the lines between performance and authenticity. In *Smoke*, a family gathers under the pressure of an approaching fire, forced to confront years of silence, absence, and unresolved hurt. There are no masks here—or perhaps there are, just worn differently. In both plays, isolation becomes a crucible. Whether it is a castle cut off from the world or a home threatened by evacuation, these spaces force the characters to reckon with themselves and with one another. Control becomes an illusion. Time, whether marked by the ticking of a clock or the rapid advance of a fire, refuses to wait.

And at the center of both stories is survival.

Survival of identity.

Survival of family.

Survival of memory.

These plays remind us that survival is rarely clean or simple. It is messy. It is complicated. It asks us to decide what we carry forward and what we are willing to leave behind. At Native Voices, we are drawn toward stories that live in that complexity. Stories that do not offer easy answers but instead invite us to sit in the questions. Stories that reflect the evolving realities of our communities while honoring the histories that shape us.

As you experience these works, I invite you to lean into the tension between them—the surreal and the familiar, the theatrical and the intimate—and notice where they meet. You may find that, despite their differences, they are asking the same thing of us: to look inward, to listen closely, and to consider who we are when everything else is stripped away.

Because in the end, these stories are not asking us to solve anything.

They ask us to sit in discomfort.

To listen for what lingers inside the silence.

To see one another more fully. Beyond the mask, beyond the smoke.

To recognize ourselves in both the fire and the shelter we create for each other.

And to remember, long after we leave this space, that even in uncertainty, even amid unraveling, we are still here.

Not alone.

Carrying story.

Carrying each other.

Carrying forward.

DeLanna Studi

DeLanna Studi, Native Voices Artistic Director

FEATURING



Smoke



by **Drew Woodson** (Te-Moak
Band of Western Shoshone)

The Autry: Saturday, June 6, 2:00 p.m.

La Jolla Playhouse: Saturday, June 27, 4:00 p.m.

In the summer of 2018, amid the chaos of the California wildfires, a family gathers in their Clear Lake home, where old wounds and new revelations ignite tensions more intense than the encroaching blaze. With secrets, survival, and strained bonds at its core, *Smoke* is a searing exploration of family, identity, and resilience in the face of inevitable change.

Director: **Maddox Pennington** (Cherokee)

Dramaturg: **Amber Kay Ball** (Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians)

Stage Manager: **Nico Parducho**

LEOPOLD Darrell Dennis (Secwepemc)

MAYA Jehnean Washington (Yuchi/Shoshone/Seminole)

BRIAN Benny Wayne Sully (Sicangu Lakota)

ANTHONY Kholan Studi (Cherokee)

AMY Jaymee Wood

FEATURING



Medea's Masquerade



by **Frances Koncan**
(Couchiching First Nation
[Anishinaabe])

The Autry: Sunday, June 7, 2:00 p.m.

La Jolla Playhouse: Saturday, June 27, 1:00 p.m.

A young Native journalist arrives at a castle in the depths of the Canadian prairie to interview a legendary artist. As a mysterious plague threatens to erase memories, the night unfolds into an unearthly masquerade that explores memory, secrets, truth, and lies. Nothing is quite what it seems—and some stories refuse to be told without a cost.

Director: **Sara Pillatzki-Warzeha** (Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota)

Dramaturg: **Laura Shamas** (Chickasaw)

Stage Manager: **Yanira Loera**

JUDITH Audrey Lilyquist (Cheyenne River Sioux)

MEDEA Burgandi Trejo Phoenix (Yaqui)

REBECCA Brittini Roberts (Shxwhá:y/Nooksack)

Drew Woodson is a Western Shoshone playwright based in New York City.

His work has been read in multiple theaters across New York, including Rattlestick Theater, where he was asked to open the first annual Northeastern Native Arts Festival with his play *Your Friend, Jay Silverheels*. For this same work, Drew was named Yale's Young Indigenous Playwright of 2021. Recently, Drew served as the Native Artist for the Four Directions Artist Residency, a four-week program held across four states that culminated in a reading of his new work, *Smoke*, at Kansas City Repertory Theater. He also recently completed multiple workshops of his play, *From Above*, at NYU, Yale, and UC Berkeley, and his short play *Four Sisters, Waiting For an Exit* received its off-Broadway premiere as part of the 2025 24 Hour Plays Festival. As a writer, Drew seeks to tell stories in which Native people are allowed to take up space, be complicated, and ultimately be more than a storytelling device. Drew is an MFA Graduate of the Department of Dramatic Writing at NYU Tisch, an alum of the Page 73 Writers Group, and a current member of The Public Theater Emerging Writers Group. drewwoodson.com

Smoke was originally developed with The Alcove New Play Development Program at the Lucille Lortel Theatre and The American Indian Community House Artist Residency in NYC. It subsequently received development with the Four Directions Artist Residency, an annual program started by playwright Mary Kathryn Nagle that takes a singular Native artist on a four-state residency through the Great Plains Theater Conference in Nebraska, the Toftee Lake Center Artist Residency in Minnesota, and the Tulsa Artist Fellowship in Oklahoma, culminating in a reading at Kansas City Repertory Theatre. Since then, it has also received significant development with the Page 73 Writers Group.

Frances Koncan is an Anishinaabe playwright from Couchiching First

Nation. She grew up in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and studied at the University of Manitoba (BA in psychology) and the City University of New York–Brooklyn College (MFA in playwriting). Frances' work has been presented across Canada at theatres such as the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, the National Arts Centre, and the Stratford Festival. She currently resides in Vancouver, B.C., where she teaches playwriting as an assistant professor at the University of British Columbia. Frances' select plays include *Women of the Fur Trade*, *Space Girl*, and *Zahgidiwin/Love*. @franceskoncan

Medea's Masquerade was commissioned by Persephone Theatre in 2023 as part of their IBPOC New Play Commission program with dramaturgy by Heather Cant and Christine Quintana. Financial and dramaturgical support was provided by the Punctuate! Theatre and Pemmican Collective 2022-2023 Playwrights' Cohort and the Banff Centre 2023 Indigenous Dramaturgies Exchange, with dramaturgy by Dr. Lindsay Lachance. Additional financial support was generously provided by the Manitoba Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.



Maddox Pennington is a Cherokee playwright and actor. He has most recently directed Madeline Sayet's *The Fish* at SparkFest in Fort Worth, Texas, and *Love Chicken*, a new musical he co-wrote with creative partners Laser Webber and Tony Gonzalez. In May, he performed in *White Rabbit Red Rabbit* at The Fountain Theater. His play, *Central Standard Time* (the second play in *The Muldrow Cycle*), was developed in the 2023 Native Voices Playwrights Retreat. His work has also been read in the 2023 T/GNC Reading Festival, the Theater Viscera Podcast, Off-Off Broadway NYC's FRIGID

Queerly Festival, the Moving Arts MADLab, Native American Media Alliance TV Writers Lab, and the Creative Nations First Storytellers Festival. Maddox teaches college writing at the University of Southern California, where he is currently an assistant professor.



Dr. Sara Pillatzki-Warzeha is a theatre director, scholar, and educator. She is a co-founder of Mni Giizhik Theatre Ensemble. Sara's directing work has been seen across the Twin Cities at the Jungle Theatre, Full Circle Theater, Stages Theatre Company, Minneapolis Musical Theatre, Guthrie Theater, and other venues. Sara holds a PhD in theatre historiography from the University of Minnesota and serves on many regional and national bodies that advocate for Indigenous artists and ways of knowing. She is an enrolled member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate from the Big Coulee District and currently teaches in the Theater Department at St. Olaf College.

***“This is my land. Mine.
And no one’s ever going to
take that from me.
Not you. Not the government.
Not the cops. No one.”***

—Leopold, from *Smoke*



Laura Shamas is a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation. Her award-winning play *Four Women in Red* was published in 2025 by Broadway Play Publishing. Her short play, *Priorities*, will be produced in New York for eight performances in September 2026 as part of ReproEco, produced by MultiStages and ReproFreedom Arts and directed by Lorca Peress.

laurashamas.co



Amber Kay Ball is a citizen of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. Born in Portland, Oregon, Amber is a theatre maker, visual artist, and community-based advocate. As a contemporary Native multi-practice artist, Amber uses theatre, multimedia, and beadwork as mediums for sharing stories, truths, laughter and joy. These mediums allow them to critically explore, honor, and weave Native pasts, presents, and futures in a just and liberated format.



Yanira Loera, a theatre artist from the San Gabriel Valley area, is excited to work with Native Voices as a stage manager. Earlier this year, they graduated from California State University-Fullerton with a Bachelor of Arts in theatre. Yanira recently worked with the LA-based 2Rhythms theatre company on *Pass Over*, *The Light*, and *The One Act Showcase*.



Nico Parducho is based in Los Angeles and is excited to work with kind and talented artists. A CSU Long Beach 2020 graduate, she has worked on multiple immersive and new works including *Arcane: Enter the Undercity*, 2022 Halo World Championship, *Stranger Things: The Experience*, 2025 SD Comic Con, and more! She thanks her wonderful support system for continued faith, especially her mom and sister.

[@nicopingmechanism](https://twitter.com/nicopingmechanism)

ACTORS



Darrell Dennis is an actor, writer, director, producer, comedian, and member of the Secwepemc Nation. *The Great Salish Heist*, his feature film that he wrote, directed, and starred in, is currently streaming on Super Channel. His most recent feature film, *Sweet Summer Pow Wow*, is currently screening at film festivals across North America.



Jaymee Wood is an actor based in NYC. She has experience working with institutions such as the Atlantic Theater Company, Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute, NYU, and ArtfullWalls Gallery, among others. Her favorite theatre credits include Paige from *The Great God Pan* and the lead role of June from the in-development play of the same name. Jaymee is also an editor and works freelance for authors and playwrights in NYC. She received theater training at the Atlantic Acting School and UC Berkeley.

jaymeewood.com



Audrey Lilyquist is a nonbinary actor based in Los Angeles and a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe located in South Dakota. She received her BFA in acting for the stage and screen from Azusa Pacific University and is thrilled to be telling more Native stories.

ACTORS



Burgandi Trejo Phoenix is a Los Angeles-based storyteller whose work spans voiceover, film, television and theater. A Chicana and Indigenous (Yaqui) multi-hyphenate, her recent credits include *Fancy Dancer* at Seattle Rep and *Fake It Until You Make It* at Arena Stage. Her work as a voice actor includes Emmy-nominated shows such as Netflix's *Spirit Rangers* and Nickelodeon's *The Loud House*. A dancer and singer, Burgandi blends her multidisciplinary background with a deep commitment to authentic BIPOC representation.



Brittini Roberts is a Los Angeles-based actor from the Shxwhá:y Nation and Nooksack Tribe who grew up in the Pacific Northwest. She is a graduate of the two-year Meisner Technique program at the Elizabeth Mestnik Acting Studio, and her work includes a range of independent and student film projects. Later this year, she will appear in the docuseries *People of the West*, which centers Indigenous oral traditions and histories. Brittini is committed to truthful storytelling and meaningful representation and is honored to be part of the Native Voices community.



Kholan Studi is a Cherokee Nation actor whose theatre credits include Anthony in *Where the Summit Meets the Stars* by Frank Kaash Katasse, Haemon in *Antikoni* by Beth Piatote, and Aaron in *Haunted* by Tara Moses (Native Voices). He also performed in *Between Two Knees* by The 1491's as Pale Face/William (Yale Repertory Theatre), Isaiah/Eddie (Seattle Rep), and Ensemble (Perelman Performing Arts Center), where he and the ensemble received an Obie Award in 2025. He also appeared as Actor Four in *The Other Children of the Sun* by Rhianna Yazzie (TYA at The Kennedy Center). You can catch him as Milo in season two of *Tulsa King*. (But seriously, no pressure. Streaming residuals are terrible anyway.)

ACTORS



Benny Wayne Sully is a Sicangu Lakota actor and improviser based in Los Angeles. He has worked off-Broadway and with reputable theatre companies, including Roundabout, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, and Center Theatre Group. He is the first Native on a house improv team at the Upright Citizens Brigade in Los Angeles, where he performs on Mondays with his team “yikes!”



Jehnean Washington is of African American, Yuchi, Seminole, Shoshone, and European descent. A graduate of the American Musical and Dramatic Academy (New York campus), Jehnean has worked professionally for more than forty-five years as an actor, voiceover artist, and singer. Her voice can be heard on Grammy-nominated albums, and she performed with the world-famous, Los Angeles-based opera company The Industry. Jehnean is also an NAACP ensemble cast nominee for her work in the world premiere play *Four Women in Red*. She is a SAG-AFTRA member.



All actors are appearing through a special agreement between Native Voices and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

DESIGN RESPONDENTS

Costumes: **Lorna Bowen** (Muscogee Creek/Seminole/Cherokee)

Projections: **Deja Collins**

Scenic: **Troy Hourie** (Metis Nation of Ontario)



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

DeLanna Studi is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation and has more than twenty-five years of experience as a performer, storyteller, educator, facilitator, advocate, and activist. Her theatre credits include the first national Broadway tour of the Tony Award- and Pulitzer Prize-winning play *August: Osage County*; off-Broadway's *Gloria: A Life* (Daryl Roth Theatre); *Informed Consent* (the Duke on 42nd Street); and

regional theatres (Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Portland Center Stage, Cornerstone, and Indiana Repertory Theatre). DeLanna originated roles in more than eighteen world premieres, including fourteen Native productions. A pivotal moment in her career was writing and performing *And So We Walked: An Artist's Journey Along the Trail of Tears*, which retraced her family's footsteps along the Trail of Tears with her father. *And So We Walked* has been produced off-Broadway, throughout the country, and was recorded for Audible. In film and television, DeLanna stars in the Peabody Award-winning *Edge of America*, Hallmark's *Dreamkeeper*, *Goliath*, *Shameless*, and *General Hospital*. She is a 2022 USA Fellow and a recipient of the Butcher Scholar Award, a MAP Fund Grant, a Cherokee Preservation Grant, and the Doris Duke Performing Artist Fund. In 2026, DeLanna was the first Native playwright to be nominated for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. Since 2007, she has served as chair of the SAG-AFTRA National Native Americans Committee.



MANAGING DIRECTOR

Elisa Blandford has been producing for Native Voices since 2014, from world premieres and touring productions to Short Play Festivals, Playwrights Retreats, and Festivals of New Plays. She co-founded Vanguard Repertory Company and the Windmill Arts Center, a black box theatre and dance studio dedicated to fostering performance and visual arts. She has a BA in theatre from Florida State University and an MBA from the University of Redlands.



ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE

Jennifer Bobiwash is an Ojibway actor, playwright, and director, and is enrolled with the Mississauga First Nation. Her select regional theatre credits include *Between Two Knees* at McCarter Theatre and Seattle Rep, *Fake It Until You Make It* at Arena Stage, and *Manahatta* at Yale Rep. She has appeared in the world premieres of *They Don't Talk Back*, *Fairly Traceable*, and *Bingo Hall* at Native Voices, as well as *Devilfish* and *Whalesong* at Perseverance Theatre. On screen, she

has appeared in *Magnum P.I.* and *Rutherford Falls*. Jennifer was part of the inaugural class at the National Institute for Direction and Ensemble Creation at Pangea World Theatre, a National Playwrights Conference Semi-Finalist, a Season 21 Volt Lab writer with Company One Theatre, and an Artist in Residence at UC San Diego's Thurgood Marshall College. She continues to explore stories of First Nations people and identity, inspiring youth to realize their full potential through the performing arts, and believes that performance is a way to promote conversation and elicit action.



PRODUCTION MANAGER

Sati Thyme has been involved in various aspects of theatre throughout her life, including performance, tech, management, and more.

Originally from Santa Cruz, California, Sati helped run a theatre company and ran her own voice lesson business before she moved to Los Angeles to receive her Bachelor's degree in stage management from California State University-Fullerton. She has worked as a stage manager throughout the Greater Los Angeles area for the past nine

years, for companies such as The Fountain Theatre, New City Arts Theatre, Plan-B Entertainment and Delusion. She has gone on tour around the U.S. a couple times and has been fortunate enough to travel abroad for projects in Abu Dhabi and Thailand. Last year, Sati had the absolute pleasure of being the assistant stage manager for the CineVita, working on their inaugural production, *Tarantino: Pulp Rock*.



LITERARY ASSOCIATE

Sierra Rosetta is an emerging Indigenous playwright and theatre academic enrolled in the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe. Sierra is currently based in Chicago, Illinois, where she was named one of Theatre Communication Group's Rising Leaders of Color in Chicago in 2024. Sierra is an advocate for Native voices and women in theatre spaces. Her first full-length play, *From the Old Wood Forest*, had a staged reading at Yale University in April 2024, where it was the winner of the Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program's Young Native Playwright Award, as well as another staged reading at the Newberry Library in Chicago in January 2025. Sierra's second full-length play, *A Century of Sparrows*, had a reading at Storyknife Writers Retreat in Homer, Alaska, in July 2024 and the Association of Writers & Writing Programs in Los Angeles in 2025. Sierra's other works include *The Things That We Know* (Northwestern College) and *Remember* (Northwestern College).

sierrarosetta.com | [@sierra.rosetta](https://twitter.com/sierra.rosetta) | bit.ly/SierraRosetta-NPX.

***“Your grandparents did not survive
a genocide just for you to quit your
first ever job, move back into your
parents’ basement, and marry
Chuck from the video store just for
his video game rental discount.”***

—Judith, from *Medea’s Masquerade*



For the past thirty years, Native Voices has remained the sole Actors' Equity theatre in the country committed to developing and producing new works for the stage by Native American, First Nations, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian playwrights.

Devoted to training Indigenous artists and championing their work nationally through production and professional development opportunities, Native Voices provides a supportive setting for new play development. When founders Randy Reinholz (Choctaw) and Jean Bruce Scott entrusted their legacy to DeLanna Studi (Cherokee) and Elisa Blandford in 2020, the company's goals remained the same—to foster greater understanding and respect for all and to showcase artistic voices that might otherwise not be heard. Native Voices remains steadfast in its mission of developing Native playwrights and theatre artists, to telling Native stories by and about Native people, and to providing the public access to these plays and playwrights, but now with the hope of Indigenizing theatre, both for artists and audiences, and to create pathways of learning for the next generations of storytellers and audience members.



The Autry Museum of the American West is dedicated to exploring and sharing the stories, experiences, and perceptions of the diverse peoples of the American West, connecting the past to the present to inspire our shared future.

The museum presents a wide range of exhibitions and public programs—including lectures, film, theatre, festivals, family events, and music—and conducts scholarship, research, and educational outreach. The Autry's collection of more than 600,000 artworks and cultural objects includes one of the largest and most significant holdings of Native American materials in the United States. For more info, please visit TheAutry.org.



La Jolla Playhouse is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what's new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions,

to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire, and Mel Ferrer, the Playhouse is currently led by Tony Award winner Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, and Managing Director Debby Buchholz. The Playhouse is internationally renowned for the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 120 world premieres, commissioning 70 new works, and sending 37 productions to Broadway, garnering a total of 42 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. The Playhouse brings people together to inspire discussion and open pathways to new ways of thinking. A visit to the Playhouse is an invitation to harness the transformative power of theatre to explore the here and now—and together, expand our world's compassion, understanding and hope.

SAVE THE DATE

LACMA Live: Native Voices performance

The Space Between Labels

by Jennifer Bobiwash, Nikcoma Lee Mahkewa,
Maddox Pennington, and DeLanna Studi

Thursday, September 17, at 7 p.m.

Saturday, September 19, at 7:30 p.m.

Experience an original performance by Native Voices, created in response to the reimagined installation of the permanent collection in the David Geffen Galleries. With humor and wit, performers bring individual artworks to life, offering a fresh and thought-provoking way to engage with the collection. The Thursday performance will include a post-show moderated conversation exploring the work and creative process.

nativevoices.co for more info and tickets.



IN GRATITUDE

Your support is vital to the success of **Native Voices**, allowing us to create, develop, and produce Native theatre for a national audience. We would like to acknowledge our generous supporters.

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