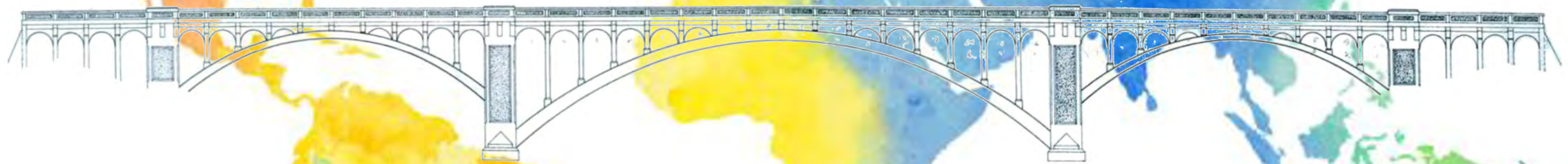


# B.R.I.D.G.E

**B**uilding **R**elationships and **I**nspiring **D**ialogue through **G**lobal **E**xchange



# Theatre Project





**WHAT WE  
DO**

***B.R.I.D.G.E Theatre Project creates  
vibrant theatre exchanges with youth  
around the globe.***

***Our transformative program takes students  
through every stage of the theatrical  
process, from concept to rehearsals, all the  
way to the finished performance.***



**HOW WE  
DO IT**



**WHY**

***We believe that children who find  
their voice can and will change the  
world for the better.***

**ALL ABOUT B.R.I.D.G.E**



**B.R.I.D.G.E Theatre Project is an international arts organization offering playwriting and acting programs to communities worldwide. Our mission is to educate, inspire, and connect young people around the globe through intensive theatre education programs that encourage self-expression, foster self-confidence, promote cultural tolerance, expand world views and perspectives, and explore solutions to community problems through the creation and exchange of original plays and theatrical productions.**

WE ARE ALL  
MADE OF LOVE

From Humble Beginnings...



**OUR MISSION**





**The B.R.I.D.G.E students are burning up the stage at Washington as they rehearse for their show.**



**As the Roosevelt and Marshall programs wrapped up for the fall, here's what the kids had to say...**

**"Knowing other people are going through the same things as me and talking about and making it in a play helped me out... B.R.I.D.G.E helped me feel I'm not alone and I could achieve in life."**

**NATALIE ESCOBAR**  
**6th grade student, Wilson Elementary**



**Middle school students perform their original plays.**

**DOMESTIC PROGRAMS**





**"Being a part of B.R.I.D.G.E has helped me break out of my shell. B.R.I.D.G.E has also helped me know that I have a voice."**

**CECILIA MALDONADO**  
**5th grade student, Helen Keller Elementary**



**DOMESTIC PROGRAMS**



**"You lit the fire underneath them... You left us with a rich experience that the students will never forget."**

**LUZ CEDEÑO**  
**School Director, Milagro, Ecuador**



**Students in Nepal show off their certificates**

**"I was amazed!"**



**Cultural exchange between Rwanda and the USA!**

**B.R.I.D.G.E brings American plays to Ecuador**



**INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS**



**Making new friends in Kigali**



**Youth ambassadors from the USA share their experience**



**Kids in Kathmandu perform plays from Ecuador**



**"I thank B.R.I.D.G.E so much for helping us."**



**Students in Milagro practice their moves**



**Young actors perform for an international audience**



# **INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS**



**"Our team was inspired and excited to begin to create original hard hitting works with local children. I am truly excited to see how we take this training and turn it into a dialogic platform for our youths... [B.R.I.D.G.E facilitators] took the necessary time to model a lesson, have us perform the same lesson, and then provide necessary feedback to improve teaching practices."**

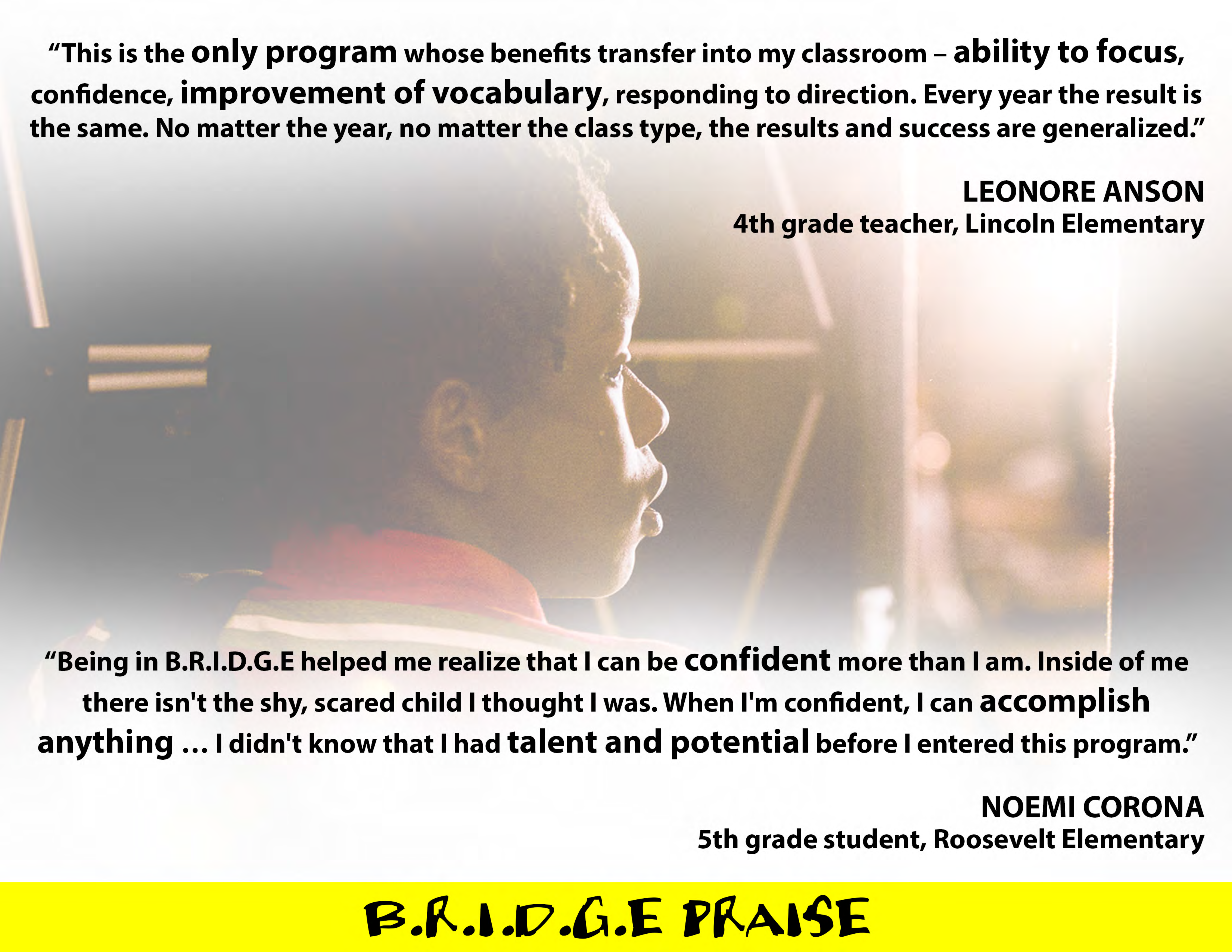
**KURTIS DENNISON**  
Project Coordinator for  
Mashirika, Rwanda

**Sharing our teaching  
methods with program  
partners in Nepal**

**Teacher training in  
Milagro, Ecuador**

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**



A young girl with dark hair is shown in profile, looking out a window. The background is a bright, hazy view of a city or landscape. A rainbow is reflected on the glass of the window, creating a colorful arc across the middle of the image. The lighting is soft and warm, suggesting a sunny day.

**“This is the only program whose benefits transfer into my classroom – ability to focus, confidence, improvement of vocabulary, responding to direction. Every year the result is the same. No matter the year, no matter the class type, the results and success are generalized.”**

**LEONORE ANSON**  
4th grade teacher, Lincoln Elementary

**“Being in B.R.I.D.G.E helped me realize that I can be confident more than I am. Inside of me there isn't the shy, scared child I thought I was. When I'm confident, I can accomplish anything ... I didn't know that I had talent and potential before I entered this program.”**

**NOEMI CORONA**  
5th grade student, Roosevelt Elementary

**B.R.I.D.G.E PRAISE**



## Meet B.R.I.D.G.E Theatre Project Co-Founders, Adam Kalesperis and Joe Quintero

September 24, 2012 by Stephanie N. Stallings

The "B.R.I.D.G.E" in B.R.I.D.G.E Theatre Project stands for "Building Relationships and Inspiring Dialogue through Global Exchange." That's what Adam Kalesperis and Joe Quintero set out to do when they developed their international theater program in 2008.



By helping youth students with different cultural backgrounds, B.R.I.D.G.E Theatre Project aims to reach out through theatre and through shared experiences. Adam Kalesperis and Joe explained to us how the two-week core B.R.I.D.G.E program works like this:

During the first week, participants collaboratively write their own short plays inspired by their experiences and concerns.

participants collaboratively write their own short plays inspired by their experiences and concerns.

## B.R.I.D.G.E Theatre Project, in partnership with the U.S. Embassy - Kigali, will prepare local arts educators to work with Rwandan children.

HOME  
ARCHIVES  
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INTERVIEWS  
MUSIC  
THEATER-CHICAGO  
THEATER-

Theater Feature: BRIDGE TO AFRICA! (B.R.I.D.G.E. Theatre Project in Kigali, Rwanda)  
by JASON ROHRER on APRIL 14, 2017  
in THEATER-REGIONAL

BRIDGE TO SOMEWHERE

SEARCH REVIEW  
BY SHOW TITLE  
PERSON'S NAME

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VISA

Make it Squares

## BRIDGE Program Introduces Lynwood Elementary Students to Theater

Marshall Elementary fifth-graders learned to perform on stage, remember lines and write plays during a multi-day theater program that will return to Lynwood schools this year.

Building Relationships and Inspiring Dialogue through Global Exchange, or BRIDGE, is designed to help students break from their comfort zones and learn to view their world in a different light.

Led by BRIDGE co-founders Joe Quintero and Adam Kalesperis, the program immerses children in the world of theater through a series of playwriting sessions to help them tell stories about their environments. The program culminates with a performance.

Quintero, who started his career on stage in New York and has appeared in numerous films and TV shows – including "Numbers," "NYPD Blue" and "Law & Order" – says the program is a way to open children to new perspectives.

"The main purpose of the program is to teach the children that no matter who we are or where we come from, we are not that different from one another," said Quintero. "Children all over the world face many of the same problems and this program bridges people together so they can learn from one another."

Kalesperis appeared in his first professional play at age 8 and has since appeared in "The Dark Knight" and "ER." The Chicago-born actor, who earned his Bachelor of Arts at UCLA, said he enjoys seeing the kids grow and develop throughout the program.



Marshall Elementary School students and the BRIDGE team line up after a dress rehearsal leading up to their performance on May 1 at the school.

Los estudiantes de la escuela primaria Marshall y el grupo del programa BRIDGE se formaron después de un ensayo previo a su actuación el 1 de mayo.

Marshall Elementary students put together plays on cleaning up litter in their community and dealing with family tensions at home.

"It is very fun and it inspired me to project my voice and act out the character I am playing," said Karena Cardenas, a fifth-grader at the school.

It was dusk. He wore pretty lighters and an Applebee's was and of the gift card as a institutions, his



## How Greek-American Playwright/Actor Adam Kalesperis Bridges Cultural Gaps

Posted By Katie Copenhaver on February 15, 2018

Greek-American Playwright and Actor Adam Kalesperis takes his talent abroad to show youth how the performing arts can help to shape their lives in positive, creative ways. Learn more!

## A Cultural Exchange Offers Artistic Collaboration

At a time when tensions among nations seem to be rising, Greek-American Kalesperis and his organization BRIDGE offer an

## El Programa BRIDGE Introduce el Teatro a Estudiantes de Escuelas Primarias de Lynwood

Los estudiantes de quinto grado de la escuela primaria Marshall aprendieron a actuar y a escribir obras de teatro durante un programa de teatro que se repite en las escuelas de Lynwood.

Universidad de UCLA, dice que disfruta viendo a los niños crecer y desarrollarse a lo largo del programa.





# Bridging Nepali and Ecuadorian cultures through plays

PUBLICA  
TIMANDU, Feb 23

then given the chance, youth will come out to case the undiscovered inside them. Some will have you taken aback. Students from Balbyasayee Kendra Secondary School and Mahendra Boudha Higher Secondary School got this chance to their stories and show their talents through an cultural exchange program which involved play-acting and performance.

organized by B.R.I.D.G.E. Building Relationships and Inspiring Dialogue through Global Exchange Theatre Project.



Students from Balbyasayee Kendra Secondary School and Mahendra Boudha Higher Secondary School perform their original plays at Mandala Theatre in Anamagar on Saturday.

be able to execute similar programs in other schools in Nepal," shared Joe.

A special presentation of the results from the workshop was showcased at the Mandala Theatre in Anamagar on Saturday.

Readings of the first acts of eight original student-written plays as well as two plays which were written by students from Ecuador were staged. The plays written by the Nepali students revolved around themes such as untouchability and discrimination against girl child. The plays from Ecuador were staged in a Nepali context and were based on themes

day lives of Nepali and the stark realities society," she said. "We're very happy the plays we've written taken to other countries."

"We also got to about the culture of dor and are very proud to have performed a play there," shared Sagar, another participant an eighth grader from Ma dra Boudha Higher Secondary School.

The Nepali partner this workshop, SPACE, found the Project through Google search and were to fix this workshop, and theatre passionate believe in linking arts

## Student ambassadors from CA perform at Rwandan Arts Festival

Lynwood Unified students Zion Bennett and Jose Laguna returned home from a trip to Rwanda as experienced international performers, after acting as American cultural ambassadors during an international arts festival. There, they helped stage two plays in front of a capacity crowd of 2,000 people.

Bennett and Laguna were chosen to represent Lynwood and showcase their acting and writing talents as part of the district's Building Relationships and Inspiring Dialogue through Global Exchange Theatre Project. The students collaborated with the Mashirika Performance Arts Company during the festival and spent nearly two weeks in Rwanda last month.

"It was so amazing, a once-in-a-lifetime experience," Laguna said. "I was nervous at first, but the students from Mashirika made us feel like we were home. Although the culture is so different, it was easy to make friends. I hope to see them again someday."

The Ubumuntu Arts Festival, held at the Kigali Genocide Memorial Amphitheater, is a commemoration of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. The event brings actors, dancers and musicians from around the world to the Rwandan capital for three days of performances, panels and workshops.

"Zion and Jose received an opportunity to see what is possible in the world and they made the most of it," BRIDGE Theatre co-founder Adam Kalesperis said.

about Rwandan history through the stirring performances they saw at Ubumuntu."

Bennett and Laguna performed alongside Mashirika students in "Arthur's Diary," a play written by Rwandan students, and watched as the students staged a production of "Great Minds Think Alike," an original play co-written by Bennett and Cesar Chavez Middle School BRIDGE students about an American family struggling with their emotions as they navigate the challenges of life.

Set several years in the future, "Arthur's Diary" centers on Arthur, played by Bennett, and his brother Manzi, played by Laguna, two children orphaned during the 1994 genocide. Inspired by his brother, Arthur grows up to be a successful author and his writings ultimately play a key role in ending a 70-year-old war between the U.S. and Russia.

"The students are really talented, and my experience with BRIDGE helped me prepare for my performance," Bennett said. "I was sad to learn about the genocide. So many young people died. But the Mashirika showed me their strength through their own performances. It was uplifting."

During their stay, the Lynwood students toured Kigali, sampled international cuisines, attended a birthday pool party, introduced their peers to American culture



Lynwood Unified students Zion Bennett and Jose Laguna visited with Rwandan students at the Ubumuntu Arts Festival in Rwanda. The students showcased their acting and writing talents abroad as part of the District's Building Relationships and Inspiring Dialogue through Global Exchange (BRIDGE) Theatre Project.

joined with the Mashirika ensemble for a dance routine, drawing an ovation from the crowd, which included U.S. Ambassador to Rwanda Peter H. Vrooman.

The Rwandan trip was arranged by the U.S. Embassy in Kigali. Bennett and Laguna, the first Lynwood students to travel outside the U.S. as part of the BRIDGE Theatre Project, were accompanied to Rwanda by Quintero and BRIDGE co-founder Adam Kalesperis, along with two teaching artists and parent chaperone Brisa Laguna.

"I could not be prouder of Zion and Jose, who traveled a great distance to spread the message of peace and harmony to an international audience," Superintendent Gudiel Crosthwaite said. "This is a major step for

Through the BRIDGE Theatre Project, Lynwood Unified students in grades four through eight learn to write short plays, perform plays and study other cultures. The program provides workshops over eight weeks for about 500 district students each year. The district has partnered with BRIDGE for four years, teaching students the basics of improvisation, character creation, vocal technique, writing conflict and dialogue, and how to collaborate with other writers and actors.

"The BRIDGE Theatre Project has had a major impact on our students, inspiring creativity, collaboration and friendship," Lynwood Board of Education President

## Elementary students' play to be performed in Africa

Fifteen Abbott Elementary School students in Lynwood USD became globally known this month for their playwriting talents when their story was performed in Rwanda about two neighboring families who decide to end their prejudiced ideologies and tear down a wall commissioned by the president.

The play, called "The Wall," is one of 76 productions created by Lynwood Unified's elementary and middle school students as part of the Building Relationships and Inspiring Dialogue through Global

commentary," said Superintendent Gudiel Crosthwaite. "The district is heavily invested in providing programs like this to stimulate student participation and creativity, which we know supports academic achievement."

The district has partnered with the BRIDGE Theatre Project, teaching district students in grades 4-8 how to write short plays, perform the plays and study other cultures. The program provides 19 workshops for nearly 500 district students over eight weeks to teach students the basics of improvisation, character creation, writing

(Back center) BRIDGE Theatre Project cofounder Adam Kalesperis, teaching artist Claire Larsen, (back right) Abbott Principal Adolfo Herrera and BRIDGE Theatre Project cofounder Joe Quintero stand with the Abbott Elementary playwrights and actors of "The Wall," a Lynwood Unified play selected to be performed in Rwanda.

"Our mission is to educate, inspire and connect young people around the globe through inter-



While this is the first international project that Lynwood Unified has participated in, the BRIDGE Theatre Project

# The New Times

RWANDA'S LEADING DAILY

News Opinions Sports Lifestyle Events TimesTV Jobs & Tenders

## ENTERTAINMENT

## Ubumuntu Arts Festival inspires dialogue through global exchange

"Joe Quintero (the other co-founder of B.R.I.D.G.E Theatre Project) and I were first introduced to Mashirika in the fall of 2012, when they performed their powerful play 'The Wall' in Los Angeles."



## Lynwood Unified Elementary Students Stage 100th Play for BRIDGE Theatre Project



Students perform a play on April 25 through the District's Building Relationships and Inspiring Dialogue (BRIDGE) Theatre Project. The District recently enjoyed its 99th and 100th BRIDGE performances.

# PRESS/PUBLICATIONS





## JOE QUINTERO

Growing up on two continents, with family in Ecuador and New Jersey, Joe was raised in two culturally diverse environments. He learned at a very young age how to navigate different worlds by identifying common threads, and through his formative experiences was inspired to facilitate the exchange of ideas between different cultures.

Later on, while training as an actor in New York, during a performance for young playwrights Joe caught a gleam in the eyes of a 10 year old boy as he witnessed the impact his story had on the audience. That moment planted the seed that would eventually become B.R.I.D.G.E Theatre Project.

In his career as a professional actor, Joe appeared in film and TV, on stage in NYC and regional theatres across the country, and in several European tours, including Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Joe's work as a teaching artist and educator with top arts nonprofits in New York and Los Angeles has equipped him with the knowledge and skills to lead his own thriving arts organization. With B.R.I.D.G.E, he has managed programs and facilitated professional development workshops locally and internationally, and has been a guest speaker for the California School News Radio, SoCal Drama Therapy Center, USC's Parkside Masters Series, and Emerging Arts Leaders/Los Angeles.

Joe is beyond excited to bring professional theatre by young people to audiences all over the world with B.R.I.D.G.E.



## ADAM KALESPERIS

The importance of theatre and the arts in providing life skills and unlocking creative potential is something Adam experienced first-hand as a child. At the age of eight, he appeared in his first professional play, and he continued his involvement in the performing arts throughout school, later earning his B.A. in Theatre at UCLA with an emphasis in acting and playwriting. Professionally, Adam worked as an actor in regional theatres in Chicago and Los Angeles, in addition to film and television.

Since 2005, Adam has been working extensively in the nonprofit sector, serving in a variety of programming and administrative positions. As an arts educator and teaching artist, he has taught youth in foster care, correctional facilities, and underserved communities throughout Los Angeles County.

Recognizing a need to bridge cultural gaps between young people, in 2009 Adam collaborated with Joe Quintero to create B.R.I.D.G.E Theatre Project, using original, youth-written theatre as a means of connecting communities across the globe. Since its inception, B.R.I.D.G.E has initiated theatre exchange programs in four continents – traveling to Ecuador, Nepal, and Rwanda, while expanding domestic programming to reach over 500 students each year in elementary, middle and high schools. With B.R.I.D.G.E, Adam has produced over 100 original plays written and performed by young people all over the world.

# FOUNDERS





## TONY GATTO

Tony Gatto has been a Teaching Artist in L.A. for 15 years. He has instructed, taught and directed through and with: B.R.I.D.G.E., Chautauqua Institution, SUNY Fredonia Summer Theater, The Center Theatre Group, The Screen Actors Guild Foundation, A Noise Within -- Summer With Shakespeare, LA's Best After School Arts Program (ASAP), A.C.E.@Oakwood Academy School, and with more than 20 schools within the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Tony thrives in bringing 'theater as art' to schools and organizations that have little or no cohesive arts programs. He uses his skills to challenge young actors to be brave, honest, and vulnerable by finding a voice to share their minds and hearts in a new way.

Tony has produced, directed & acted in various productions throughout Los Angeles for the last 20 years as well.



## SHARON FREEDMAN

Sharon Freedman is proud to be one of the original teaching artists to work with B.R.I.D.G.E Theatre Project's domestic program based in Lynwood, CA. She has also taught with The Unusual Suspects, and B.R.I.D.G.E in Africa. She's done drama therapy with CANY and has been a personal breakthrough coach for over 6 years working with artists, entrepreneurs, and educators with her company Stress Reduction Joy Production. Acting credits include TV: Chicago Med, Henry Danger and The Young & the Restless. Theater: Rattlestick (NY), Sacred Fools (LA), Shakespeare Theatre of NJ. She is a member of the Obie Award winning Partial Comfort Productions, Ensemble Studio Theatre/LA and is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. For more: [www.sharonfreedman.com](http://www.sharonfreedman.com)



## EMILIANO TORRES

Emiliano Torres has been working with kids for over 17 years through dance, martial arts and theatre. Fluent in both English and Spanish, he is able to connect with a wider range of kiddos and loves to fuse his dancing techniques whenever possible. Coming from an inner city himself (Oakland), he is also able to relate to our youth from other underserved communities and is always encouraging them to excel in their education. Having a BA in theatre from CSULB and also working professionally as actor (2 Broke Girls, CSI, Raising Hope, Shooter, etc.) he is able to bring real world showbiz experience to the kids that may want to pursue a career in Hollywood.



## MARK KOPITZKE

Mark is a multidisciplinary artist and educator who received his BA in Theater Arts from Azusa Pacific University. Upon graduation, he revamped the non-profit theatre company, Azusa Renaissance, and founded their after school program. A guest lecturer for theatre for social change and devising ensemble workshops, he also wrote and co-directed APU's student devising ensemble in their Edinburgh Fringe piece, #AllofusinWonderland - using the world and characters of Lewis Carroll to explore how social media influences our relationships. Mark is also a freelance visual artist, scenic designer, and international vocal soloist and frontman for various pop, classical, and jazz ensembles including the Glenn Miller Orchestra. Mark is currently conducting interviews on political discourse amongst citizens and leaders, hoping to help create an empowering culture of civic participation.

# TEACHING ARTISTS



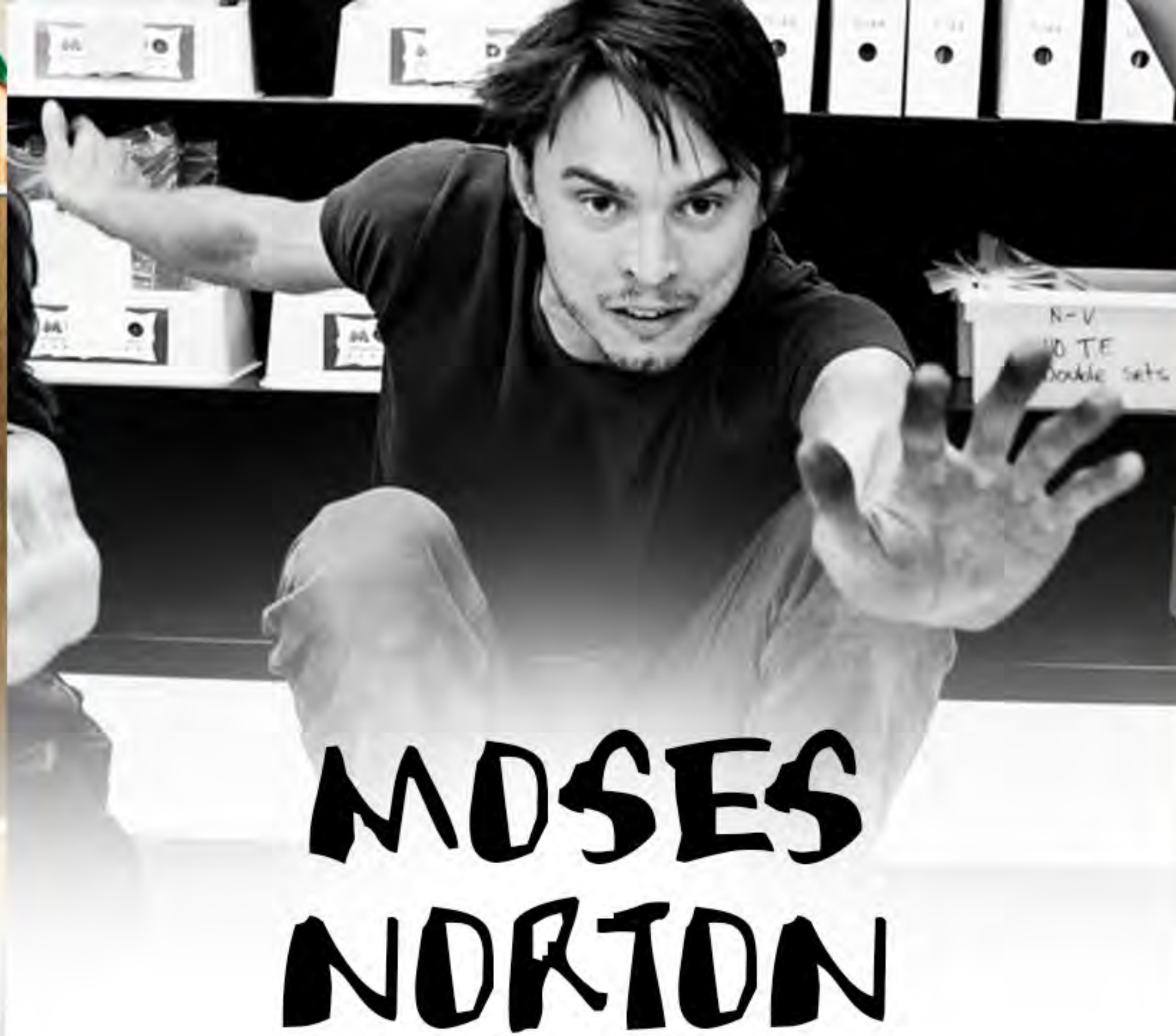


## LEE SHERMAN

Lee is thrilled to be a Teaching Artist for B.R.I.D.G.E and has worked with students in theatre arts for Center Theatre Group and the Screen Actors Guild Foundation. Lee is also an acting coach at Gary Spatz's, THE PLAYGROUND, privately coaches young actors for film/television/theatre and has worked for DISNEY as an on-set dialogue coach.

Some of Lee's notable theater experiences have been performing her one-woman show, Un-Rule-Lee: I'm Too Big For That Box, Off-Broadway, performing in Denver Center Theatre's 2018 New Play Summit, and in Black Women: State Of the Union. Lee has received favorable reviews in Stage and Cinema, Los Angeles Times, LA Weekly and Backstage West.

Lee believes that working with kids keeps alive her own "inner child" -- Life's a Playground...Let's Play!



## MOSES NORTON

Moses Norton is a physical theatre artist, actor, director, acrobat, theater creator, and community-based arts facilitator. He graduated with an MFA in Ensemble-Based Physical Theatre from the Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre, completed a year of Lecoq based physical theatre training at Estudis Berté Tóvies in Barcelona, Spain, and studied Acting Physicality, Clown, and Improvisation at UC Santa Cruz.

As a teaching artist Moses has worked as an Adjunct movement and acrobatics instructor for the Dell'Arte International School of physical theatre's Graduate program as well as their Summer Intensive.

Currently he is teaching bilingual theatre workshops in the Los Angeles Area and has just begun a project "CHAMBEANDO EN PASADENA (WORKING IN PASADENA)."



## CLAIRE LARSEN

Claire Larsen is an actress, writer and educator. Her New York theater credits include PS 122, The Ohio, La MaMa ETC, The Producer's Club and The International WOW Company. She has studied dance since the age of 10 and continued her training at The Mark Morris Dance School with Ashley Tuttle (ABT) and The Joffrey Ballet School. From 2007 - 2012, Claire taught drama, ELA and dance for grades 3-8th, and lead workshops on arts integration with an emphasis on increasing literacy skills in public schools across NYC. From 2009-2012, she was a Teaching Artist and Teacher Mentor with LEAP (Learning Through an Expanded Arts Program) and their award winning program, Active Learning Leads to Literacy. In 2012, Claire left New York to pursue an MFA in Acting at California Institute of the Arts. At CalArts she worked extensively with the Community Arts Partnership Program.



# TEACHING ARTISTS



**CONTACT B.R.I.D.G.E**

**WEBSITE: [www.bridgetheatre.org](http://www.bridgetheatre.org)**

**EMAIL: [info@bridgetheatre.org](mailto:info@bridgetheatre.org)**

**PHONE: +1 323 377 1969**



**CONTACT**



A low-angle, upward-looking shot of a diverse group of people of various ages and ethnicities. They are all looking towards the center of the frame, where their hands are raised and stacked on top of each other in a circular formation. The lighting is warm and golden, creating a sense of hope and unity. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the hands and faces in the foreground.

# **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND INSPIRING DIALOGUE THROUGH GLOBAL EXCHANGE**