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Crystal Manich (left), Celeste Moreno (center) and Bethany Brinton (right)

THEATER LATTÉ DA AWARDS \$20,000 NEXT GENERATION COMMISSION TO SUPPORT NEW MUSICAL THEATRE BY WOMEN ARTISTS AND BIPOC ARTISTS

(Minneapolis/St. Paul) Theater Latté Da today announces Bethany Brinton, Crystal Manich and Celeste Moreno as the recipients of the NEXT Generation Commission in 2022, furthering Theater Latté Da's commitment to providing opportunities for women artists and BIPOC artists. The NEXT Generation Commission supports the creation and development of new musical theatre projects whose creative teams are at least 50% women artists or BIPOC artists. The creative team will share the \$20,000 commission. While under commission, the team will work on a project currently titled *The Legend of La Llorona - A Zarzuela of La Frontera: A Border Story in Music*. Imagined as a gothic

music-theater ghost story, it is based on the Mexican myth of La Llorona, The Weeping Woman, re-envisioned through the lens of personal family history. The project will receive creative and developmental support over an 18-month period, including two developmental workshops and future inclusion in Latté Da's annual NEXT Festival. They join a vibrant list of artists currently under commission to create new musicals at Theater Latté Da including Jessie Austrian, Noah Brody, Steven Epp, Bradley Greenwald, Maria Isa, JuCoby Johnson, The Kilbanes, Meghan Kreidler and Michael Anderson of *Kiss the Tiger*, Harrison David Rivers, Kelley Rourke, Ted Shen, Andrew Wilkowske and Sally Wingert.

Throughout its history, Theater Latté Da has found ways to bring artists together to create new work, resulting in some of its most memorable and beloved productions from *All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914* and *A Christmas Carole Petersen* to *Five Points* and *Twelve Angry Men*.

"As we embrace the return to live theater, this investment in new work ensures that we have new stories to tell. Emerging from a time when artists saw income and opportunities evaporate, it feels especially good to be putting money directly into the hands of artists. We are grateful to the NEA, the Ruth Easton Fund, and the NaraFund as well as the Latté Da donors who have given generously to our slate of new works initiatives. They help make opportunities like these commissions possible," says Founding Artistic Director, Peter Rothstein.

"I'm delighted to begin our relationship with this amazing group of women and to support a new theatre piece steeped in Latinx myths and music. We look forward to nurturing their unique theatrical talents at Theater Latté Da and providing opportunities for them to engage with our extraordinary community of artists in the Twin Cities," says Associate Artistic Director, Elissa Adams, who oversees Theater Latté Da's new work initiatives. "All of the artists who have chosen to make us a part of their creative lives are exploring new ways to connect story and music for our audiences. It's on mission for Theater Latté Da and for what the field of musical theater needs as well."

The NEXT Generation Commissioned-Artists

Composer/Librettist **Celeste Moreno** is the lead character designer on *Central Park*, Apple TV's animated musical comedy. A songwriter for television, including Disney's *Phineas and Ferb*, she was Emmy nomination shortlisted for the song, "Taking A Stroll," on Milo Murphy's Law. She has written and directed animation shorts for Anonymous Productions, HBO, and Cartoon Network. Her short

"Inconvenient Ruth," premiered during the environmental benefit concert, Live Earth hosted by Al Gore, and was featured in the Tribeca Film Festival.

Puerto Rican director **Crystal Manich** has directed over seventy productions in opera, plays, musical theatre, and film across the United States, Argentina, and Australia. She recently directed the world premiere opera *The Copper Queen* as a western thriller feature film for Arizona Opera as well as her first production of *West Side Story* for Opera San José. Passionate about the Spanish language and stories about the Latiné experience, she directed two Spanish operas by Daniel Catán, one for which she received a 2021 Chicago Emmy nomination. She has also directed the world premiere play for young audiences *Return to Sender* by Marisela Orta at Nashville Children's Theatre as well as Michael John LaChiusa's musical *Bernarda Alba* for Theater Latté Da in Minneapolis to critical acclaim. Crystal was the Co-Founding Artistic Director of Opera Omnia and toured with Cirque du Soleil's Quidam in Brazil as Assistant Artistic Director. She also served as Artistic Director for Mill City Summer Opera in Minneapolis. Crystal holds a BFA in Drama-Directing and a Master's in Arts Management from Carnegie Mellon University.

Composer/Arranger **Bethany Brinton** is a Los Angeles-based composer whose music can be heard in award winning projects of all mediums, including songs for Amazon's *Pete The Cat*, Disney's *Milo Murphy's Law*, and the main titles for *James May: Our Man in Japan*. She composes for highly awarded films included in the San Diego International Film Festival, Los Angeles Diversity Film Festival, Independent Shorts Awards, and has won an Audience Award in the Dances With Films Festival. In her imaginary spare time, she's watching movies.

Theater Latté Da is an award-winning Twin Cities musical theater company that combines music and story to illuminate the breadth and depth of the human experience. The company seeks to create new and impactful connections between story, music, artist, and audience by exploring and expanding the art of musical theater. www.latteda.org

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