Who would you trust to tell your story?

That was the question that Cleveland activist Johanna Orozco-Fraser and journalist Rachel Dissell had to contemplate when playwright and director Tlaloc Rivas contacted them. His first email, sent on New Year's Day 2014, said in part:

“Your story came to my attention years ago. As you know, [Johanna's] story is an inspiration to many Latinos and young women across the country.

I share your belief that stories and storytelling have the potential for social change. The plays I create aim to tell stories that provoke a conversation about important subjects between artists and audiences. I believe that Johanna's story has that potential.

As it happens, I will be traveling to Cleveland [soon]... I'd like to talk with you about whether a play inspired by your articles can happen.”

The three met just a couple of weeks later. Orozco-Fraser, who survived a near-fatal attack by her ex-boyfriend and became a leading advocate for change in Ohio’s domestic violence laws, had become lasting friends with Dissell, a Plain Dealer reporter, as Rachel wrote a series of articles chronicling Johanna’s recovery in 2007 (the complete 9-part series is available here). Both friends decided that Rivas deserved their trust. They gave their blessing to his effort to bring their story to the stage.

Just hours later, CPT Executive Artistic Director Raymond Bobgan offered the project a home at this theatre. As Rivas began to shape the script, Orozco-Fraser and Dissell became treasured advisors and collaborators on this new telling of the story.
Johanna: Facing Forward

Written and Directed by Tlaloc Rivas

May 28th - June 13th
7:30pm, Gordon Square Theatre
Tickets are $12 - $28

Inspired by the true story of Johanna Orozco, a Cleveland teen who survived a gunshot wound to the face by her boyfriend in 2007 and whose story sparked a nation-wide movement against teen domestic violence. Based on the Pulitzer prize-winning series "Facing Forward" by Plain Dealer journalist Rachel Dissell, Johanna: Facing Forward is a vivid recount of the young woman's extraordinary journey of courage and recovery. Produced in conjunction with Teatro Publico de Cleveland. World Premiere.

Featuring Tania Benites, Becky Aviles, Andrea Belser, Courtney Brown, Arthur Chu, Jason Estremera, Stuart Hoffman, Leticia Lopez, Gilberto Peña, Alejandro Rivera and Blanca Salva

Sarah Lynne Nicholas- Stage Manager
Megan Monaghan Rivas- Dramaturg
Aaron Benson- Scenic Designer
Inda Blatch-Geib- Costume Designer
T. Paul Lowry- Video Designer
Sam Fisher- Sound Designer
Michael Cunningham- Lighting Designer

The writings of Rachel Dissell...
Johanna Orozco: Photo courtesy of Gus Chan/Plain Dealer

Johanna: Facing Forward is based on the writings of Johanna Orozco and the Pulitzer prize-winning series Facing Forward, originally published in the Cleveland Plain Dealer in September, 2007. Click Here to read the full 9-part series, and to learn how Johanna's story - and her tireless advocacy and activism - led to the approval of critical legislation aimed to protect teens in abusive relationships.

Meet the Playwright and Director...

Tlaloc Rivas is a writer, director, and theatre-maker who creates, develops and directs new plays focusing on the complexity, diversity and history of Latina/os in the United States and abroad. He also directs bilingual plays, classical and contemporary pieces, and new work by some of America's most exciting writers.

Originally from Baja California, Mexico and raised in Northern California, Tlaloc graduated with honors from the University of California Santa Cruz, and received his MFA in Directing from the University of Washington's School of Drama. He splits his time between Iowa City (as Assistant Professor of Theatre at The University of Iowa) and Pittsburgh, where his wife Megan teaches at Carnegie Mellon University. He also enjoys running and hiking with his dog Xîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîχîchi!
Onda. As former Co-Chair of the LTC’s National Steering Committee, he helped organize the largest gathering of Latina/o artists in 25 years at Emerson College, Boston. He is a member of ATHE’s Latina/o Focus Group, a member of the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (NALAC) and an Associate Member of Stage Directors and Choreographers, the national union for stage directors and choreographers.

From the Dramaturg... (and what is a "dramaturg" anyway?)...

A dramaturg is a jack of all trades: a researcher, advocate, interface for the director, literary editor, consultant, a specialist. Dramaturgs work closely with playwrights and directors to inform choices and to dissect theatrical structure.

Megan Monaghan Rivas, Dramaturg of Johanna: Facing Forward, has been conducting extensive research on Johanna Orozoco’s impact on legal reform. Johanna’s advocacy helped pass two bills in the Ohio state legislature.

One made it possible for young people under 18 to get orders of protection against other young people under 18 - the "Teen Dating Violence Bill."

The other, "Tina’s Law" or "The Tina Croucher Act," made it mandatory for Ohio public schools to teach a curriculum on domestic violence prevention. The law was named in memory of a teenage girl who was killed by her ex-boyfriend in a murder-suicide. Johanna lobbied for the law and after it was passed, she frequently spoke in schools and other venues to help train teachers, counselors and students.

Click Here to read highlights from Megan’s research about the "Teen Dating Violence Bill," "Tina’s Law" and national teen violence statistics.

Photos from the rehearsal room...

Photos by Alejandro Rivera, member of Teatro Publico de Cleveland, photographer and cast member of Johanna: Facing Forward
Tlaloc Rivas, Director and Playwright

Blanca Salva, Tania Benites and Becky Aviles
What is Teatro Publico de Cleveland?
Click the thumbnail above to view a short documentary created by ArtsFwd.

In 2013 Cleveland Public Theatre launched **Teatro Publico de Cleveland**, a local Latino theatre company.

The purpose of this new theatre ensemble is to share the rich diversity and perspectives of the Latino-Cleveland culture to fulfill CPT's core mission: to raise consciousness and nurture compassion through groundbreaking performance and life-changing educational programs.

[Click here for more information.](#)

**Thank you to our **[Johanna: Facing Forward](#)** partner...**

![Lutheran Hospital](#)

**a Cleveland Clinic hospital**

**Coming Soon to Playhouse Square...**
Exact Change
Written and Performed by Christine Howey
Directed by Scott Plate
June 11 - June 27
Times vary, see below
Playhouse Square in the Helen Rosenfeld Lewis
Bialosky Lab Theatre

Playhouse Square | 1407 Euclid Avenue | Cleveland
44115

Tickets: $29.50

A moving play about finding your voice and championing your identity, Exact Change is the powerful and personal story of noted Cleveland actor, journalist and critic Christine Howey (formerly Dick Howey). Before transitioning in 1990, Ms. Howey was a celebrated stage actor in Cleveland, known for playing such heavy-hitting male roles as Lucifer, Goebbels, "Terrible Jim Fitch," Richard Nixon, God and others. Exact Change is a one-woman tour-de-force spiced with political rants, historical reflections, personal stories and an incisive wit that truly packs a punch.

Event Times at Playhouse Square

For directions, tickets and other info, visit the Playhouse Square website.

- Thu, Jun 11, 2015 8:00 PM
- Fri, Jun 12, 2015 8:00 PM
- Sat, Jun 13, 2015 5:00 PM
- Sat, Jun 13, 2015 8:30 PM
- Thu, Jun 25, 2015 8:00 PM
- Fri, Jun 26, 2015 8:00 PM
- Sat, Jun 27, 2015 5:00 PM
- Sat, Jun 27, 2015 8:30 PM
Show and ticket info:

All performances take place at Cleveland Public Theatre, Gordon Square Theatre
6415 Detroit Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44102.


Shows are Thur/Fri/Sat/Mon at 7:30pm. Thursday and Monday shows are just $12!

For tickets and show information, call the CPT Box Office at 216-631-2727 x501 or visit [www.cptonline.org](http://www.cptonline.org).

FREE BEER FRIDAY is every Friday at CPT. Audience members are invited to mingle with artists after the show and enjoy a drink on CPT!

Want to see the complete 14/15 season at-a-glance? Visit [www.cptonline.org](http://www.cptonline.org) for up-to-date information on all of our upcoming productions!