

ArtsUP! LA and Returning Soldiers Speak have joined together to form *The Letters Project*. Drawing from the rich and complicated tapestry of history, they've curated correspondence letters between those deployed and those at home to serve as the inspiration behind this original theatrical production, "Across Time: Love & Humanity During War"

June 7 – 16, 2024

Thur, Fri, & Sat @ 8PM; Sun @ 3PM

The Blue Door

9617 Venice Blvd. Culver City, 90232

For more information visit:  
[ArtsUpLA.org](http://ArtsUpLA.org)

# ABOUT THE LETTERS PROJECT



ArtsUP! LA and Returning Soldiers Speak believe in the transformative power of story. Through dialogue, workshop, and performance, veterans, first responders, and their families gain new understanding about themselves and the world around them. Empowered, they seek integration back into the community and at the same time the community gains new perspective and understanding about what it means to serve.

Our intent is to give voice to veterans who have experienced war as well as to show how the different wars affected and continue to affect their relationship to the military. In addition, it is our hope that the audience will gain new understanding about our veterans and what it means to serve in uniform.

Drawing from the rich and complicated tapestry of history, the correspondences between those deployed and those at home serve as the inspiration behind an original theatrical production, "Across Time: Love and Humanity During War." These letters, spanning from past wars and conflicts such as the Civil War to Operation Freedom's Sentinel (1 January 2015 to 30 August 2021), provide a poignant window into the hopes, fears, and observations of those who served.

## OUR VETERAN PLAYWRIGHTS

Our veteran playwrights, each with their own experience in the United States Armed Forces, bring authenticity and depth to the stories of their fellow veterans through their visions and playwriting. Spanning across different conflicts and wars, our veterans infuse their personal experiences and insights into their respective narratives.

Through this live performance, audiences will witness the myriad of humanity encapsulated in these historical letters, original plays, and monologues written by living veterans of the United States Armed Forces. This production offers a unique perspective complexity on the human aspect of war, spanning from the Civil War to the beginning of The War on Terror.

*Selected letters courtesy of the Center for American War Letters Archives, Leatherby Libraries at Chapman University*

# ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS



ArtsUP! LA is a nonprofit theater and arts organization serving people with disabilities, military veterans, and Los Angeles based youth. We remove barriers to participation and provide unlimited possibilities for artistic expression, building diverse artists and audiences who are changing how the arts are presented and experienced.

## Our Mission

ArtsUP! LA is a bridge between professional theater and overlooked communities. Our stage ignites artistic expression, fosters human connection, illuminates understanding, and brings diverse artists and audiences of all mind, body, and life experiences into a shared place of unlimited possibility.

## Our Programs

**Theatre by the Blind:** The only all-blind and visually impaired theatre troupe in the country.

**Rex & Friends:** Music programs and performance opportunities for musicians with various disabilities including autism and blindness.

**Creative Youth Theatre:** In-school drama programs and performance opportunities for Los Angeles based youth.

**Veterans Empowerment Theatre:** Theatre and writing workshops for our country's brave service members.

For more information visit: [ArtsUpLA.org](http://ArtsUpLA.org)



**Returning Soldiers Speak** began in 2005, when founder, Leilani Squire started writing about the wounded soldiers coming back from Iraq, hoping to somehow make sense of what she was seeing on the news and media about the war. In late May 2020, she introduced a creative writing workshop for soldiers and veterans at the West Los Angeles Veteran Hospital in the Domiciliary.

Thus "Returning Soldiers Speak" was born and continued helping veterans write and tell their stories to the community in a meaningful way.

For more information visit: [ReturningSoldiersSpeak.org](http://ReturningSoldiersSpeak.org)

# ACROSS TIME: LOVE AND HUMANITY DURING WAR

## ACT ONE

**Coming Home: Chapter 1** by Doug Gabrielle with Joe Luis Cedillo

Vietnam | Army

Sgt Walker – Vince Wainwright

Chorus – Miguel Berlingeri, Mathias Blake, Anthony Garcia, Nina Rancel

S1 Staffer – Maggie Dewan-Smith

CO – Jonaton Wyne

**Dreamland in Eagle's Nest** by Leilani Squire with Glenn Schiffman

World War II, The European Theater | Army

Al – Mathias Blake

Marge – Nina Rancel

**Eulogy for Gerald** by Ken Klemm

Gulf War | Army

Mary – Maggie Dewan-Smith

Father Sullivan – Jonaton Wyne

Gerald – Miguel Berlingeri

**The Pardon** by Melvin Ishmael Johnson

Civil War | Army

George A. Caldwell – Vince Wainwright

Government Official – Miguel Berlingeri

**Bullets and Seashells** by Miguel Berlingeri

Philippine-American War | Army

Edward – Mathias Blake

Jessica – Denah Angel

Michael – Anthony Garcia

Prisoner -Nina Rancel

**Missed Connections** by Ralph Carlson

World War II, The Pacific | Army

Paul – Miguel Berlingeri

Judy – Maggie Dewan-Smith

Larry – Jonaton Wyne

**Coming Home: Chapter 2** by Doug Gabrielle with Joe Luis Cedillo

Vietnam | Army

Sgt Walker – Vince Wainwright

Hippie – Anthony Garcia

Son – Hudson Wainwright

Wife – Denah Angel

# ACROSS TIME: LOVE AND HUMANITY DURING WAR

## ACT TWO

**Coming Home: Chapter 3** by Doug Gabrielle with Joe Luis Cedillo

Vietnam | Army

Sgt Walker – Vince Wainwright

Therapist – Maggie Dewan-Smith

Son – Hudson Wainwright

Wife – Denah Angel

**Waiting** by Gwyn LaRee

The War on Terror | Army

Kate – Denah Angel

Brad – Anthony Garcia

Steve – Vince Wainwright

**My Korean Soldier** by Lester Probst

Korean War | Army

Henry – Mathias Blake

Linda – Nina Rancel

Mom – Maggie Dewan-Smith

**The Path at Belleau Wood** by Benjamin Fortier

World War I | Army

Eugene – Vince Wainwright

George – Anthony Garcia

Narrator – Jonaton Wyne

**Wind and Sand** by Kathleen Moorhead

Cold War – Vietnam | Air Force

Older Ruth – Maggie Dewan-Smith

Younger Ruth – Denah Angel

Tony – Mathias Blake

Pilots – Anthony Garcia and Vince Wainwright



# MEET THE CAST



**Maggie Dewan-Smith**

Maggie served in the USAF Reserve as a Flight Nurse for 16 yrs, activating for Desert Storm; later an Admin Nurse in the Air Force Surgeon General's office in Washington DC. She retired as a Lieutenant Colonel and also retired from UCLA where she worked as an RN, Nurse Practitioner, Lecturer, and Assistant Clinical Professor. Developing her acting, she studies with Richard Gilbert-Hill and Helen Hunt, plus zoom classes with Allan Miller and Richard Fancy. Maggie is a Second City Conservatory Grad and dabbles in writing. She is a member of the SAG-AFTRA Military Committee and a Continuing Medical Education (CME) consultant for the California Heart Foundation.



**Vince Wainwright**

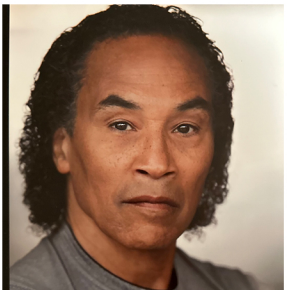
Vince Wainwright started his acting career at 40 years old and is honored to be a part of this project. He served five years in the Navy and completed 3 deployments from 2002-2007.

Vince recently participated in the VET acting workshop at The Blue Door and is looking forward to future opportunities to share his stories on stage.



**Miguel Berlingeri**

Miguel Berlingeri is making his theatrical debut and is loving every minute of the process- except not having a social life! A Marine Corps veteran, he served in the infantry during Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield as part of Task Force Grizzly. After 25 years in construction Miguel decided to switch directions and start over. He graduated from Full Sail University on June 2nd 2023 with a Bachelor's of Science in Film. He acted in 27 short films and worked on over 30 short films in various other capacities from Director to Grip. He moved to LA in August of 2023 and not long after was involved with Veterans Empowerment Theatre where he has learned more about his own mental health, refining the craft, while making great friends along the way.



**Jonaton Wyne**

A product of NYC, but now a full time Angeleno, Jonaton went to college to play football, but ended up changing his major to theater arts. Jonaton served in the US Army and spent a tour in Vietnam. He just finished Melvin Ishmael Johnson's play, "Revolutionary Genocide", he was in "Catch the Tiger", and was in the award winning love story, "Sabado Mornings". On camera, he has appeared in General Hospital, The Paramedics, and The Shield.



**Anthony L. Garcia**

Anthony L. Garcia was born and raised in West Los Angeles, where he began his acting career in musical theatre. Professional work includes collaborations with Ensemble Studio Theatre, Chalk Repertory Theatre, and Skylight Theatre Company. He has recently transitioned to acting for the camera and is featured in American Bodega (dir. Roxana Altamirano), REALITY 101 FAILURE (dir. Genevieve Erickson), and Transition (dir. Trina Calderon). Garcia is managed by URA Entertainment.

# MEET THE CAST



**Denah Angel**

Denah is first and foremost an artist and puts her imagination and creativity into everything she does. She is an actress, comedian, writer, singer and producer whose work has been featured across film, television, digital and stage. Denah is a proud member of SAG-AFTRA and a member of Ensemble Studio Theatre. Originally from Seattle, Washington, Denah holds a degree in theater from Marymount Manhattan College. She feels all the gratitude in her capacity for her beautiful family and is truly thankful for her friends and collaborators.



**Mathias Blake**

Mathias Blake (they/he) is wonderfully excited to make their LA theatre debut with ArtsUP! LA. Recently transplanted from Chicago and theatre graduate from the University of Iowa, Mathias has a passion for new devised work and voiceover. Some of their favorite roles include Dakin in *The History Boys* and Julius Caesar in *Julius Caesar*. When not performing (or rock climbing), they can be found producing and directing film, including their new short film, *The Second First Kiss*, and improvised web series, *Life of Harold*.



**Nina Rancel**

Nina Rancel is an award-winning Venezuelan actress, writer, singer, dancer and stand up comedian. She trained in Flo S. Greenberg's Actors' Workshop in NYC, under renowned filmmaker Elia K. Schneider in Caracas and Los Angeles and in *The Second City Hollywood*. Nina has worked in film, television, theater and new media in the U.S., Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia and Spain. She has two Comedy Central LatAm specials.



**Hudson Wainwright**

Hudson Wainwright is making his theatrical debut in this production of "*Across Time: Love & Humanity During War*"

Hudson is in fourth grade, and when he's not doing homework or practicing his lines; he's playing Fortnite.

Hudson is so excited to be part of this cast as well as this production!



# MEET THE WRITERS

## **Miguel Berlingeri**

Miguel Berlingeri is making his theatrical debut and is loving every minute of the process- except not having a social life! A Marine Corps veteran, he served in the infantry during Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield as part of Task Force Grizzly. After 25 years in construction Miguel decided to switch directions and start over. He graduated from Full Sail University on June 2nd 2023 with a Bachelor's of Science in Film. He acted in 27 short films and worked on over 30 short films in various other capacities from Director to Grip. He moved to LA in August of 2023 and not long after was involved with Veterans Empowerment Theatre where he has learned more about his own mental health, refining the craft, while making great friends along the way.

## **Ralph S. Carlson**

Ralph S. Carlson, Emeritus Professor of English at Azusa Pacific University, was trained in Hanoi Dialect Vietnamese at the Presidio of Monterey, October 1968-April 1970. Following Security School at Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo, Texas, he served a year in Vietnam both as an O4B Translator-Interpreter, and as 98G Voice Intercept Operator with the rank of Specialist 5th Class, returning stateside in October 1971. The GI Bill saw Carlson through advanced degrees in English literature and linguistics at the University of Oregon. He taught English writing and literature courses at Cal State San Bernardino, 1978-1981. At Azusa Pacific University, 1981-2014, he taught English literature, grammar, linguistics and creative writing/poetry classes. During his career and in retirement, Carlson has made short-term English workshop and other aid-related trips to China and Vietnam with ECF International. Over 440 of Carlson's poems have appeared in journals, including the Returning Soldiers Speak anthology; Northwest Review; The Texas Review; The Cape Rock; The Nebraska Review; The Hawai'i Review; War, Literature and the Arts; Vietnam Generation; Sunstone; and Vietnam War Generation Journal.

## **Joe Luis Cedillo**

Joe Luis Cedillo is a left-handed Chicano playwright, director, actor, dramaturg and sound designer specializing in new plays, devised work, community-based, site-specific and intersectional work. He's a former Life Guard and Cancer survivor who attended the University of Iowa's MFA Playwrights' workshop. In another life, he was also a 3rd ANGLICO Marine Corps Paratrooper/Field Radio Operator/F.C.T. Team Chief from '92 to '99 based out of Terminal Island with 36 static line jumps including his Thai Jump wings courtesy of Cobra Gold '95. He started his Theatre career in the 99-seat theaters in Los Angeles before landing as the former Literary Manager/Production Dramaturg for Houston's Alley Theatre. He's the former Associate Artistic Director for Luis Valdez's El Teatro Campesino and current Associate Artistic Director at Texas State's Black and Latino Playwright's Celebration helping develop new plays. He's been commissioned by the LA History Project and NYC's MET Museum and Houston's MFAH Museum. He's a two-time Runner up for the Kennedy Center's ACTF National Latino Playwriting Award, 2016 Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Sound Design Nominee, and Runner-Up Keneda playwriting Award. He's currently a member of Playground LA's Writer's Pool and EST/LA's Playwright's Unit. Twitter: @JoeLuisCedillo, Instagram: joeluiscedillo

## **Benjamin Fortier**

Benjamin Fortier grew up in Northern Rhode Island. He enlisted the Marine Corps Reserve and within 10 days of high school graduation, he was standing on the yellow footprints at Parris island. He served as an infantry team member with 1st Battalion, 25th Marines in Fallujah, Iraq in 2006. His latest book, Phantoms, was awarded the 2024 Robert A. Gannon award for poetry dealing with Marine Corps life. He is currently serving as the vice president of the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines Association.

## **Melvin Ishmael Johnson**

Melvin Ishmael Johnson was born in the Mississippi Delta on December 1, 1947, in Greenville, Mississippi and graduated from Coleman High School (1966). He served in the United States Marine Corps (1969-71). After being honorably discharged from the services, he attended Eastern Michigan University. In 1973, he Co-Founded the African Renaissance Theater Company of (Ypsilanti-Ann Arbor), Michigan. (1973-1980) with Darrell Dean, Josh Webb, and Robert Ingram.

At present he is the Director of Dramastage-Qumran Veterans Theater Workshop (dramastage-qumran.org). Author of plays: Surviving the Nickel, Catch the Tiger, Number One Recruit, Nail Heads, The Loyalty Oath, and The Emperor's Last Performance. Co-Author: The 101 Club with Judith Bowman and If the SHU Fits: Voices from Solitary Confinement with Andy Griggs. He developed the Anti-Violence Situation Coping Group as a conflict resolution group for military veterans and wrote three plays about military veterans, Nobody Told Us, The Hero Within, and Soldier to Soldier. In 2015, he performed the role of Lennox in the Robey Theatre production of The Magnificent Dunbar Hotel and in 2016, directed George Corbin's, Sabado Mornings. In 2019, he wrote and directed his play about Los Angeles Playwright Lynn Manning, Voice from The Village for the Hollywood Fringe Festival, and Bright New Day about the history of the historic Coleman High School, Greenville, Mississippi.

He has written a manual about how to put together a National Black History Theater Company entitled, Black History National Theater Manual, and recently finished his latest play and screenplay about the latter years of Paul Robeson and William Patterson entitled, Revolutionary Genocide. [www.bymelpressllc.com](http://www.bymelpressllc.com)



# MEET THE WRITERS

## Ken Klemm

Ken Klemm served in the U.S. Navy from 1985 to 1989, and spent three years on board the U.S.S. Claude V. Ricketts, DDG-5 as a Sonar Technician (STG). During that time he made a forward deployment on a six-month cruise of the Mediterranean, where he got to see France, Italy, Spain, Turkey, Egypt and Israel. He currently lives in Burns, Oregon and enjoys photography, writing and doomscrolling through animal themed videos on YouTube. He has been featured at Returning Soldiers Speak readings and is published in the organization's anthologies.

## Gwyn LaRee

Gwyn LaRee is a Desert Storm era Marine Corps veteran who lives with multiple disabilities resulting from her service. She has been a professional actress since 2012 as well as an active volunteer in both the veteran and disability communities. Gwyn's membership includes the following: Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Marine Corps League, Veterans in Media & Entertainment (VME), the American Legion and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA). Working with her service dog, Simba, from 2010-2017 Gwyn promoted access and service dog acknowledgement across the United States in conjunction with America's VetDogs. Gwyn now lives in SW Washington state where she runs a small alpaca rescue and retirement home when she is not acting.

## Kathleen Moorhead

Kathleen Moorhead served in the United States Air Force from 1979-1984 as a Staff Sergeant working on the C-130's inertial navigation systems. She has had readings of her plays performed in Florida, is a member of the Dramatists Guild, and an alumna of the Kennedy Center Playwriting Intensive. She's honored to represent the voice of a Captain (who was a Flight nurse during the Cold War to the Vietnam War) through her letters and to be included in the production of Across Time: Love & Humanity During War.

## Lester Probst

Lester Probst served on the DMZ with the U.S. Army's 40th Infantry Division during the Korean Conflict from 1953-54. In 1959, he graduated from New York University as an electrical engineer. His first job was designing flight simulators, and he formed and led several computer companies until he retired in 2002. In 2004, after his wife retired from teaching they moved to Los Angeles. In 2014, he joined the American Legion, Hollywood Post 43 where he was introduced to creative writing by Returning Soldiers Speak. There he co-wrote with several veterans a two-act play that was workshopped and featured at ESTLA's 2019 Winterfest event, highlighting marginalized demographics to the community. Following that performance he began to workshop his own play, VOLUN-TEARS, which is about women in the military and Military Sexual Trauma. Then the pandemic shut everything down. During the pandemic, he joined various groups writing and performing both live and on zoom. He wrote monologues, performed a nine-minute comedy set, and co-wrote and acted in a two-minute film. At the end of the pandemic, the Veterans Empowerment Theater produced VOLUN-TEARS at the Blue Door Theater (the theatrical home ArtsUP! LA) in Culver City, California. There were seven shows, performed by a mostly military veteran cast and crew in late December 2022 and in early January 2023. Lester is also an active member of the Dramatist Guild of America and Veterans Empowerment Theater; a member/advisor of Veterans in Media and Entertainment; and a Board member of El Pueblo Park Association.

## Glenn Schiffman

Glenn Schiffman was a Conscientious Objector during the Vietnam War. He studied for two years at the Ecumenical Institute San Francisco from 1968-1970. He was granted CO status by his draft board reserve colonel in a quid pro quo agreement with his father who was a minister, and who knew the colonel beat his wife. Glenn did not know about the agreement at the time. After serving two years as a CO, he was blacklisted by the FBI. He currently lives in Montana with his wife of many years and enjoys babysitting their two grandchildren. Glenn is a published writer and teacher.



# DIRECTOR & CREW



**Douglas Gabrielle (Director, Writer, & Lighting Designer)**

Doug has been designing lights and acting for more than three decades, primarily in San Diego and Los Angeles. His L.A. Designs include: Pasadena Shakespeare Co: Comedy Of Errors, The Libertine, Othello; Sacred Fools: Don Juan In Chicago, Tell The Bees, Valparaiso, Caesar Chavez, Lights Out, Puzzler, Crumble-Lay Me Down Justin Timerlake, Absolutely Filthy; Porters of Hellsgate: Pericles, Prince of Tyre, Cymbeline (Valley Theatre Award Nominations for both); South Coast Repertory Theatre: Absolutely Filthy; L.A. Shakespeare Center: Macbeth; Group Repertory Theatre: More than a dozen designs, including their musical revue, L.A. Now And Then. Since 2020, Doug has been the Technical Director of the Blue Door Theater in Culver City. He has been the lighting designer of The Boys Next Door, Almost Maine, and numerous other works including Romeo Rocks the 80's, The Braille Legacy, and Los Arboles Mueren de Pie. Doug is excited to make his directorial debut with "Across Time: Love & Humanity During War".



**Leilani Squire (Producer & Writer)**

Leilani Squire is the daughter of LTJG Grant Robert Squire, who served thirty years in the United States Navy. She was born at Tripler Army Hospital in Honolulu while her father was deployed on an aircraft carrier during the Korean War, and raised in the military. She's CEO of Returning Soldiers Speak, 501(c)(3), whose mission is to empower veterans and their families to tell their stories to the community through the written word and live theater. She's an award-winning playwright, published writer, certified creativity coach, and member of EST/LA, Playwrights Unit, The Dramatist Guild, alumna of Kennedy Center Playwriting Intensive and EST/LA's The Ignite Project. She has been published in Smith & Krauss' 2023 Best 10-minute Plays and WE/US: Monologues for The Gender Minority. 15 Dead Souls won Veterans Repertory Theater's inaugural 10-minute play competition and opened

their 2023 Parlor Series. No Ordinary Mother was a finalist of The A Chronicles and first read in New York last Fall. Memorial Day is part of Grief Dialogues: The Play, with a reading scheduled in New York in November. One of her greatest honors is to be a part of this production and working with such wonderful and talented cast and crew.

**STAGE MANAGER**  
**Miles Berman**

**LIGHTING DESIGN**  
**Douglas Gabrielle**

**COSTUME DESIGN**  
**Linda Muggeridge**

**PUBLICITY**  
**Scott Golden**

**BOOTH OPERATOR**  
**August McAdoo**

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS**  
**Bryan Caldwell & Leilani Squire**

**PRODUCED BY**  
**ArtsUP! LA & Returning Soldiers Speak**

# ArtsUP! LA is proud to welcome you to



The first theater of its kind, **The Blue Door** is a venue operated by ArtsUP! LA and is a dedicated home for artists of all backgrounds and abilities including individuals with disabilities, military veterans, and LA based youth. Located in the heart of Culver City, The Blue Door is home to Theatre by the Blind, Rex & Friends, Creative Youth Theatre, Veterans Empowerment Theatre, and ArtsUP! Studios. Come look inside The Blue Door and see how we are *Transforming Lives...One Show at a Time!*

The Blue Door is located at 9617 Venice Blvd, Culver City, CA 90232  
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ArtsUP! LA would also like to recognize John & Lynn Shane and The Albert Parvin Foundation for their continued support!

ON BEHALF OF ARTSUP! LA & RETURNING SOLDIERS SPEAK WE'D LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING THIS PERFORMANCE! WE RELY ON THE SUPPORT OF DONORS LIKE YOU TO SUSTAIN OUR PROGRAMS AND PROVIDE LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCES FOR OUR PARTICIPANTS.

# PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING!

ALL PROCEEDS WILL BE SPLIT BETWEEN BOTH ORGANIZATIONS

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