



THE
**HEART
SELLERS**

STUDIO



FRIENDS,

I'll never forget the day of callback auditions for *The Heart Sellers*. Director Danilo Gambini asked everyone who came in to talk a bit about the play and how they connected to it. More or less to the person, each actor's response came with tears. "This character is my mom," they said, or "this play gives words to my experience of coming to this country in way that nothing else has," or "I was ashamed of my mother's accent growing up, and this play makes me feel terrible about that all over again." I've experienced many kinds of audition sessions, but until that long May afternoon, never one that I would call profoundly moving.

This play invites us to watch the macro play out in the micro. Its title is a play on words that invokes the Hart-Celler Act, a landmark piece of immigration reform legislation that passed in 1965 (by a now unimaginable margin of 318-95). That act replaced nationality-based quotas with a system that prioritized skills and family connections, opening up new pathways for immigrants from Asia, Africa, and South America. Over the ensuing decades, the act has dramatically altered the demographic make-up of our country.

But this play is less interested in national policy than in the lived experience of immigrants, and how profoundly challenging and lonely it can be to find yourself in the in-between, with no country that feels like home. Each of this production's designers, all immigrants, describe similar discombobulations: not knowing how to be funny in a foreign tongue, feeling like the air smells wrong, struggling to make new friends.

This is the first time a DC theatre company is producing a Lloyd Suh play. That's surprising—Lloyd has fast become a leading American dramatist. He's best known for a series of plays that dramatize often-forgotten episodes in Asian American history, especially *The Far Country*, a 2023 Pulitzer Finalist, and *The Chinese Lady*, which has been produced coast-to-coast by nine different theatre companies.

The play is well-matched to director Danilo Gambini's sensibilities. Danilo is himself an immigrant from Brazil, but even more importantly, he, like this play, leads with the heart, and uses theatre to forge connections across difference. This is his last production with us as Studio's Associate Artistic Director before he leaves to pursue his ambitions as a freelance director. We're happy to have offered him a stop on his journey that felt a bit like home.

Yours,

David Muse
Artistic Director

For more background on the play and production, read a note from dramaturg and Studio Literary Director Adrien-Alice Hansel on our website at studiotheatre.org/the-heart-sellers-dramaturg-note



STUDIO THEATRE

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**REBECCA ENDE
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THE HEART SELLERS

BY
LLOYD SUH

DIRECTED BY
DANILO GAMBINI

The Heart Sellers is presented through special arrangement with and all authorized materials are provided by TRW PLAYS, 1180 Avenue of the Americas, Suite 640, New York, NY 10036. www.trwplays.com

The Heart Sellers was commissioned by Milwaukee Repertory Theater as part of the John (Jack) D. Lewis New Play Development Program (Mark Clements, Artistic Director; Chad Bauman, Executive Director) and received its first public performance on February 7, 2023.



The Director and/or Choreographer is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union.



The scenic, costume, lighting, and sound designers in LORT Theatres are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA829 of the IATSE.

This Theatre operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theaters and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

SET DESIGNER
MARCELO MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA

COSTUME DESIGNER
HELEN Q. HUANG

LIGHTING DESIGNER
MINJOO KIM

SOUND DESIGNER
LIAM BELLMAN-SHARPE

DRAMATURG
ADRIEN-ALICE HANSEL

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGERS
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EBONY GENNES*

DIALECT COACH
JOY LANCETA CORONEL

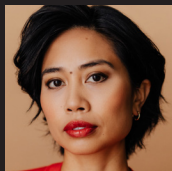
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JEFFERY MARTIN

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
RHIANNON SANDERS

CASTING
KATJA ZAROLINSKI, CSA

UNDERWRITTEN BY
JOAN AND DAVID MAXWELL

CAST



LUNA
**FRANCESCA
FERNANDEZ***



JANE
JEENA YI*

UNDERSTUDIES

LUNA
DION DENISSE PEÑAFLO

JANE
SEDONA YUN SALB

SETTING

A midsized city in the US.

Thanksgiving Day in 1973, eight years after The Hart-Celler Act extended immigration access to skilled workers.



*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Mangers in the United States

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PLAYWRIGHT



LLOYD SUH

is a 2023 Pulitzer Prize finalist for *The Far Country*. In addition, Lloyd was the recipient of the 2022 Harold and Mimi Steinberg Award, the 2020 Horton Foote Prize, and the 2019 Herb Alpert Award for Theater. His play *The Chinese Lady* premiered as a co-production by Barrington Stage Company and Ma-Yi Theater Company and was hailed as a *New York Times* Critic's Pick during its New York run. It returned to NYC in a co-production between The Public Theater and Ma-Yi in 2022. In the 2022-2023 season, Lloyd's play *The Far Country* premiered at the Atlantic Theater Company and was also a *New York Times* Critic's Pick; *The Heart Sellers* also premiered that season at Milwaukee Rep to rave reviews. His other plays include *Charles Francis Chan Jr.'s Exotic Oriental Murder Mystery* produced by National Asian American Theatre Company, *The Wong Kids in The Secret of the Space Chupacabra GO!* produced by the Children's Theatre Company (CTC) in Minneapolis and Ma-Yi, and *Bina's Six Apples* produced by CTC and Alliance Theater Company. Lloyd is currently under commission at The Huntington Theatre Company, Barrington Stage Company and The Perelman Performing Arts Center.

DIRECTOR



DANILO GAMBINI

is a director and producer originally from São Paulo, Brazil. He is the Associate Artistic Director at Studio Theatre. Recent directing credits include *Wipeout* at Studio, the world premiere of *Ni Mi Madre* at Rattlestick Theater (OBIE Award Winner, Drama Desk Nomination, *New York Times* Critic's Pick), and *The Rake's Progress* and *Idolanta* at Yale Opera. Upcoming engagements include *A Case for the Existence of God* at Mosaic Theater Company. His production of *Agreste (Drylands)* at Spooky Action Theater received six Helen Hayes Awards Nominations, including Outstanding Director. Other credits include the world premiere of the musical *Sabina* at Portland Stage; *Fun Home*, *The Tempest*, and *Rock Egg Spoon* at the Yale School of Drama; and *Agreste (Drylands)*, *Bakktai*, *The Swallow and the Tomcat*, and *Truck* at Yale Cabaret. Operas include *Don Giovanni*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and *Eugene Onegin* at Teatro São Pedro. Before his tenure at Studio Theatre, he was the Associate Artistic Director at Rattlestick Theater, Co-Artistic Director at Yale Summer Cabaret, a member of Roundabout Directors Group, and a member of TPOC - Theater Producers of Color. He has developed work at The Public Theater, Joe's Pub, The Old Globe, Ars Nova, Milwaukee Rep, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Chautauqua Opera, Gulfshore Playhouse, and Latinx Playwrights Circle, amongst others. Danilo holds an MFA in Directing from the Yale School of Drama and a BFA in Film and Television and an artist diploma as an actor from the School of Dramatic Art, both at the University of São Paulo. danilogambini.com.

2025-2026

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Marty Austin Lamar and Ro Boddie in *Paradise Blue*.
Photo by Margot Schulman.

FRANCESCA FERNANDEZ (Luna) is a New York-based actor making her Studio Theatre debut. Her theatre credits include *Smart* at The Brick; *Sorry/Not Sorry* at Ars Nova; *Gloria: A Life* at the Daryl Roth Theatre; *Kenny's Tavern* at 59E59; *Marilla of Green Gables: Becoming a Family* at Royal Family Productions; *House of Telescopes* at Pipeline Theatre Company; *Love, Medea* at The Center at West Park; *Bald Sisters* at Steppenwolf Theatre Company; *Exotic Deadly: Or the MSG Play* at San Francisco Playhouse; *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson – Apt. 2B* at Dorset Theatre Festival; *Twelfth Night* at KC Rep; *The Good Person of Szechwan* at California Shakespeare Theater; *The Hotel Plays* at the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival; and *Jonah (u/s)* and *...what the end will be (u/s)* at Roundabout Theatre Company. Television credits include *Law & Order: SVU* (NBC), *Blue Bloods* (CBS), and *Great Performances – Gloria: A Life* (PBS). Audio performances include *King Lear* and *Othello* (Play on Podcasts). She has an MFA from Yale School of Drama. On social media @chesfernandez (Instagram) francescafm.com.

JEENA YI (Jane) is a Korean American actor and writer. Born and raised in Los Angeles, she now calls New York City home. Jeena made her Broadway debut in *Network*. Other credits include *The Beastiary* at Ars Nova, *Daphne* at LCT3, *Somebody's Daughter* at Second Stage, *Judgment Day* at Park Avenue Armory, and *Vietgone* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival/Seattle Rep. Television work includes *Nyad* (Netflix), *The Resident* (FOX), and *Only Murders in the Building* (Hulu). Jeena is a member of Seoulful Productions's 2025 Korean Writers Lab. Her first play *JESA* will make its Off Broadway premiere through Ma Yi Theater Company at The Public Theater in Spring 2026. She holds an MFA from Columbia University. On social media @JeenaYi (Instagram) JeenaYi.com.

PRODUCTION

MARCELO MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA (Scenic Designer; he/him/él) is a proud Mexican scenic designer and architect. His Off Broadway credits include *Manahatta* at The Public Theater and *The Wind and The Rain* at En Garde Arts and Vineyard Theatre. Regional credits include *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill* at Gulfshore Playhouse, *AZAD (the rabbit and the wolf)* at Hakawati and Golden Thread Productions, *Dial M for Murder* at Alley Theatre and Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, *Sandra and The Garbologists* at TheaterWorks Hartford, *Torera* at Alley Theatre, *The Woman in Black* at Weston Theater Company, and *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles* at Yale Repertory Theatre. He also served as associate/assistant designer for *SUFFS* and *Lempicka* on Broadway and *Scene Partners* at Vineyard Theatre. Marcelo holds a degree in Architecture

from Tecnológico de Monterrey, a specialization in Scenic Design from Centro CDMX, and an MFA in Theater Design from Yale School of Drama. marcelomg.com. On social media @marcelomgdesigns (Instagram).

HELEN Q. HUANG (Costume Designer) is an award-winning costume designer whose credits include *Summer, 1976* at Studio Theatre; *Quixote Nuevo* at the Denver Center for Performing Arts (Henry Award), South Coast Repertory, Seattle Rep, and Portland Center Stage; *Soft Power* at Signature Theatre (Helen Hayes Award nomination); *The Chosen* at Milwaukee Repertory Theatre; *Next to Normal* at Round House Theatre; *The Far Country* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre; *The Janeiad* at The Alley Theatre; and *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Helen is a

PRODUCTION

professor of Costume Design at the University of Maryland, College Park. helenquang.com.

MINJOO KIM (Lighting Designer) is a lighting designer who works internationally and whose work was last seen at Studio in *Fat Ham* and *English*. Her other DC credits include *Kim's Convenience* and *Waitress* at Olney Theatre Center, *Twelfth Night* at Folger Theatre, *The Comeuppance* at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, *Ink* at Round House Theatre, and *King of the Yeas* at Signature Theatre. Regional credits include *The Far Country* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, *Demon* at The Bushwick Starr, *American Fast* at City Theatre Company, *The Chief* at Pittsburgh Public Theater, *The Royale* at KCRep, *A Few Good Men* at Bristol Riverside Theatre, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love & Murder* and *Cambodian Rock Band* at TheatreSquared, *Life Sucks* at Cygnet Theatre, and *one in two* at Diversionary Theatre. International credits include *The Two* at The Space Aul, *Crimson Girl* at Dongsoong Art Center, and *Die or Not* at Seoul Art Space in South Korea, and *Mask on/off* at Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre in Mullae, China. Her work *The Royale* was selected for the National Exhibit at Prague Quadrennial in 2023. minjoo-design.com.

LIAM BELLMAN-SHARPE (Sound Designer) is a U.S.-based Australian composer, sound designer, writer, and multi-instrumentalist working in theatre, music, film, dance, installation, and hybrid forms. Liam's recent theatrical credits include *The Smuggler* and *The Beacon* at The Irish Repertory Theatre, *SUMO* at The Public Theater and Ma-Yi Theater Company, *The Matchmaker* and *Octet* at Hudson Valley Shakespeare, *The Song of Rome* at The Spoleto Festival USA, *The Age of Innocence* at Arena Stage, *Babbitt* at Shakespeare Theatre Company, and *Escaped Alone* at Yale Repertory Theatre. Recent film credits include the score for *Mothers and Lovers* and music and lyrics for *Parallel*, which won first place in the 2024 Sci-Fi London 48 Hour Film Festival. Liam holds an MFA in

Sound Design from the Yale School of Drama, and a Bachelor of Music with First Class Honours from the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music at the University of Melbourne.

ADRIEN-ALICE HANSEL (Dramaturg; she/her) is the Literary Director at Studio, where she has dramaturged the world premieres of *The Scenarios*, *Problems Between Sisters*, *Good Bones*, *John Proctor is the Villain*, *I Hate it Here*, *Queen of Basel*, *Red Speedo*, and *Lungs*, among others, as well as productions of *Wipeout*; *Paradise Blue*; *Summer, 1976*; *Exception to the Rule*; *The Colored Museum*; *Fat Ham*; *Fun Home*; *English*; *Curve of Departure*; and *Wig Out*; among many others. Prior to joining Studio, she spent eight seasons as a member of and then running the Literary Department at the Actors Theatre of Louisville and its Humana Festival of New American Plays. She is the co-editor of eight anthologies of plays from Actors Theatre and editor of 13 editions of plays through Studio. Adrien-Alice holds an MFA from the Yale School of Drama.

ANTHONY O. BULLOCK (Production Stage Manager) is happy to be back at Studio after last working on *The Children*, prior to which he was the Resident Production Stage Manager (PSM) for two seasons with highlights *The Hard Problem*, *Cloud 9*, and *Jumpers for Goalposts*, among others. Other credits include *The School for Lies* at Classic Stage Company; *Frankenstein*, *Leopoldstadt*, *Red Velvet*, and *Our Town* at Shakespeare Theatre Company; *Billy Elliot* at Signature Theatre (DC); *The Pajama Game* at Arena Stage; *SOUL: The Stax Musical* and *Twisted Melodies* at Baltimore Center Stage; and five seasons as Resident PSM at Theater J, with highlights including *Prayer for the French Republic*, *Hester Street*, *Moses*, and *Sheltered*. Additional credits include Barrington Stage Company, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Passage Theatre Company, Shakespeare & Company, and McCarter Theatre Center, among others. *The White Snake*, produced in association with the Goodman Theatre as part of the Wuzhen Theatre Festival in Wuzhen

China, was an international highlight. He received his BFA at Oklahoma City University.

EBONY GENNES (Production Stage Manager) is a writer, advocate, and theatre creator. Her theatre credits include *Paradise Blue* at Studio; *Sleepova, Built for This* (workshop), and *Ken Ludwig's Lend Me a Soprano* at Olney Theatre Center; *Tiny Lights* and *The Chameleon* at Theater J; *Romeo and Juliet* and *By the Queen* (Reading Room Festival) at Folger Theatre; and *Company*, *Rock of Ages*, *True West*, and *The Outsiders* at The Cumberland Theatre. She has a bachelor's degree in Theatre from Frostburg State University. ebonycharlene.com. On social media @EbonyGennes (Instagram and Facebook).

JOY LANCETA CORONEL (Dialect Coach)'s selected New York credits include *What Became of Us*, *The Great Leap*, and *Nomad Motel* at Atlantic Theater Company and *Among the Dead* and *Once Upon a (Korean) Time* at the Ma-Yi Theater Company. Selected regional credits include *A Christmas Carol*, *Dial M for Murder*, and *Stones In His Pockets* at TheatreSquared; *The Sins of Sor Juana*, *Smart People*, and *Sense and Sensibility* at American Players Theatre; *King John*, *Loving and Loving*, and *Dracula* at Actors Theatre of Louisville; *Chonburi International Hotel & Butterfly Club* at the Williamstown Theatre Festival; *The Heart Sellers* at the Guthrie Theater, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, and The Huntington Theatre Company; *The Far Country* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre; and *Drawing Lessons* at Children's Theatre Company. She holds a BFA from the University of Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music and an MFA from Central School of Speech and Drama. www.joylancetacoronel.com.

KATJA ZAROLINSKI, CSA (Casting) is thrilled to be casting for another production for Studio Theatre. Katja is a New York-based casting director handling productions for theater, film and television. Previous casting work includes Broadway, Off Broadway and regional productions at Alley Theatre, Arena Stage, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, Barrington Stage Company, Berkshire Playwrights Lab, Cape Playhouse, Chicago

Shakespeare Theater, City Theatre Company, Connecticut Repertory Theatre, Contemporary American Theater Festival, Crossroads Theatre Company, Everyman Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, George Street Playhouse, Goodspeed Musicals, Guthrie Theater, Irish Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, Mosaic Theatre, Olney Theatre Center, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Pittsburgh CLO, PlayMakers Repertory Company, Pittsburgh Public Theater, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Seattle Rep, Shakespeare & Company, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Signature Theatre (DC), South Coast Repertory, TheaterWorks Hartford, Virginia Stage Company, Virginia Theatre Festival, Weston Theater Company, and many more.

STUDIO THEATRE is a national leader in the production of contemporary plays. Over 46 years and more than 425 productions, Studio has grown from a company that produced in a single rented theatre to one that owns a multi-venue complex stretching half a city block, but has remained committed to core distinguishing characteristics: deliberately intimate spaces; excellence in acting and design; and seasons that feature many of the most significant playwrights of our time. Studio's seasons are intentionally diverse and eclectic, featuring buzzworthy plays from today's hot writers, groundbreaking world premieres, and reinvigorated contemporary classics, produced and performed by leading local, national, and international artists. Studio also incubates and develops new work, nurtures the next generation of arts leaders, and proactively engages with its community through a wide array of initiatives. Studio is committed to inclusion and access, and makes a concentrated effort to proactively dismantle barriers that have excluded people from joyful participation in our art form. Studio's location, rich history, unique venues, and commitment to artistry have made it a regional landmark, where audiences find the best that contemporary theatre has to offer.

For additional bios and more information visit: studiotheatre.org/the-heart-sellers

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ITA: Immigrant Theatremakers Advocates is a community of immigrant artists united in advocacy, working to create a more just, equitable, and inclusive theater industry for immigrants in the United States. Their goal is to eliminate the barriers that the United States immigration system and industry practices have put on immigrant artists, and to give them an equal chance to survive and thrive in this country while pursuing a career in theater.



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KCSC: Operating in DC for nearly 50 years, KCSC's mission is to assist and empower Asian Americans and new immigrants to become well-adjusted and fully contributing members of the United States through social services, education, advocacy, and development of resources. They are guided by person-centered, empowerment-based practices, offering culturally and linguistically competent services including trauma-informed counseling, community-based outreach, education, and the development of healing partnerships.

STUDIO 25/26 SEASON

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MOTHER PLAY

A PLAY IN FIVE EVICTIONS

BY PAULA VOGEL
DIRECTED BY MARGOT BORDELON
NOVEMBER 12, 2025

OCTET

BOOK, MUSIC, AND LYRICS BY DAVE MALLOY
DIRECTED BY DAVID MUSE
JANUARY 14, 2026

JONAH

BY RACHEL BONDS
DIRECTED BY TAYLOR REYNOLDS
MARCH 11, 2026

Purlie Victorious

BY OSSIE DAVIS
DIRECTED BY PSALMAYENE 24
MAY 6, 2026

FEELING AFRAID AS IF
SOMETHING TERRIBLE
IS GOING TO HAPPEN

BY MARCELO DOS SANTOS
DIRECTED BY MATTHEW XIA
JUNE 4, 2026

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