



Childsplay's
360° Theatre Resources for Schools



THE SUN SERPENT

By **José Cruz González**

Directed by **Rachel Bowditch**

Composer: **Daniel Valdez**

Scenic Design by **Carey Wong**

Costume Design by **Connie Furr-Soloman**

Masks by **Zarco Guerrero**

Puppets by **Jim Luther**

Lighting Design by **Tim Monson**

Sound Design by **Christopher Neumeyer**

Projection Design by **Adam Larsen**

Stage Manager: **Amy Gilbert**

The Cast

Young/Elder Anáhuac. **Ricky Araiza**
Tlememe. **Andrés Alcalá**
Anci. **Andréa Morales**
Voice of Elder Anáhuac. **Daniel Valdez**

October 29 - November 13, 2011
Tempe Center for the Arts, Studio Theatre

Recommended for ages 8 and older
www.childsplayaz.org

Supported by:



About *The Sun Serpent* and Your Theatre Experience

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**WHERE EDUCATION AND IMAGINATION
TAKE FLIGHT**

The Story:

When young Anáhuac's family meets the newly-arrived Cortés, they believe he is the Sun Serpent, come to usher in a new, better world. Anáhuac's beloved elder brother eagerly joins Cortés's grand march to the capital Tenochtitlan. But while Cortés promised a world of peace and plenty, the soldiers he left behind soon engage in a ruthless search for gold. Orphaned during one of their raids, Anáhuac sets off through the jungle to find and warn his brother that the Spanish are not what they seem. Along the way, Anáhuac discovers that the omnipotent Aztec ruler Motecuhzoma is unable to protect his people against the Spanish. As the certainties in his world begin to crumble, Anáhuac must physically and mentally navigate through the land of the familiar (Aztec prophecies, sky dancers, jungles) and the frightening but intriguing possibilities of the new (Spanish horses, guitars, ships). Faced with the realization that neither leader is divine and neither culture is without merit, Anáhuac watches as Motecuhzoma and Cortés come face to face for the first time. A Childsplay world premiere featuring masks by Arizona's Zarco Guerrero.

Themes/Curricular Ties:

Aztec culture * Myths * Spanish Conquest *
Storytelling * World Religions * Metaphor * Journeys
* Loss of family * Oppression * Languages *
Epidemics * Refugees * War * Cultural Identity *
History

"On August 13, 1521, heroically defended by Cuauhtémoc, Tlatelolco fell into the hands of Hernán Cortés. It was neither triumph nor a defeat: it was the painful birth of the mestizo nation that is Mexico today."

~Plaza de las Tres Culturas, Tlatelolco, Mexico City



About Childsplay:

Childsplay is a professional non-profit theatre company of adult actors, performing for young audiences and families.

Our Mission is to create theatre so strikingly original in form, content or both, that it instills in young people an enduring awe, love and respect for the medium, thus preserving imagination and wonder, those hallmarks of childhood that are the keys to the future.

What We Do:

In addition to our weekend public performances, we also offer three theatre experiences for our school audiences: Field Trips, School Tours and Artist in Residence Programs. Field trip performances, where students come to the theater and see a production, can be booked by contacting Beth Olson at 480-921-5757. School Tour Performances, where we come to your school or other location and perform, can be booked by contacting Jaime Fox at 480-921-5751. Artist in Residence Programs, which can be individually designed to meet the needs of your school or can be based on one of our many existing formats (page to stage, creating original work, use of drama to teach curriculum, professional development for teachers), can be booked by contacting Patricia Black at 480-921-5750.

Our Home:

The Sybil B. Harrington Campus of Imagination and Wonder at Mitchell Park (formerly Mitchell School) is where you'll find our administrative offices, costume shop, prop shop, rehearsal spaces, and Academy classrooms. We love to hear from our audiences. Send your letters and reviews to:

Address: 900 S. Mitchell, Tempe, AZ 85281

Phone: 480-921-5700

Email: info@childsplayaz.org **Web:** www.childsplayaz.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/childsplayaz

To help enrich and extend your theatre experience, check out the 360° Theatre Resource Center on our website!



**We perform at the Tempe Center for the Arts
700 W. Rio Salado Parkway
Tempe, AZ 85281**

Theater Etiquette:

It's helpful to review the rules of theater etiquette before seeing a show, especially since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students. Please take a moment to discuss the following pointers prior to seeing the performance:

- Use the restroom before seeing the show as we do not have intermission during our school performances.
- Stay seated during the performance.
- Be respectful to the performers and other people in the audience by not talking during the performance. Remember, the actors can see and hear the audience just like the audience can see and hear them.
- Appropriate responses such as applause or laughter are always welcome.
- Food, candy, gum and beverages will not be allowed in the theater/during the performance.
- Use of cell phones (including text messaging), cameras or any other recording device is not allowed in the theatre/during the performance at any time.
- Following the performance (time permitting) there will be a brief question/answer session where audience members will have an opportunity to ask the actors questions about the production.



How *The Sun Serpent* came to be from director

Rachel Bowditch:

This historical poetic story of the conquest of Mexico seen through the eyes of a young boy, Anáhuac, who struggles to save his world from the conquistador, Hernán Cortés, is of great interest to me as a director. While history often leaves a trail of darkness and destruction, *The Sun Serpent* is ultimately about hope and the struggle to find the courage to persist against all odds. Embedded within the macro story of the conquest is the intimate story of a boy and his brother who are forced to take sides-one brother joining the Conquest against the Aztecs and the other fighting to preserve the memory of his ancestors and culture that was being brutally erased. Having three actors play over 30 roles offers the opportunity to explore difficult historical subject matter through the use of masks, physicality, and multi-media. The unique challenge of staging such an epic tale is to create a magical theatrical universe where the children are transported into another world that is unfamiliar to them. It is an honor to direct the rich, dynamic story crafted by José Cruz González and to work with our amazing design team to create a potent, provocative, and moving glimpse into a part of history that is often overlooked. This journey of struggle and transition is a universal one that resonates across historical and geographical boundaries-our aim is to make it accessible to a young audience. This adventure story is not only entertaining but portrays the strength of the human spirit.

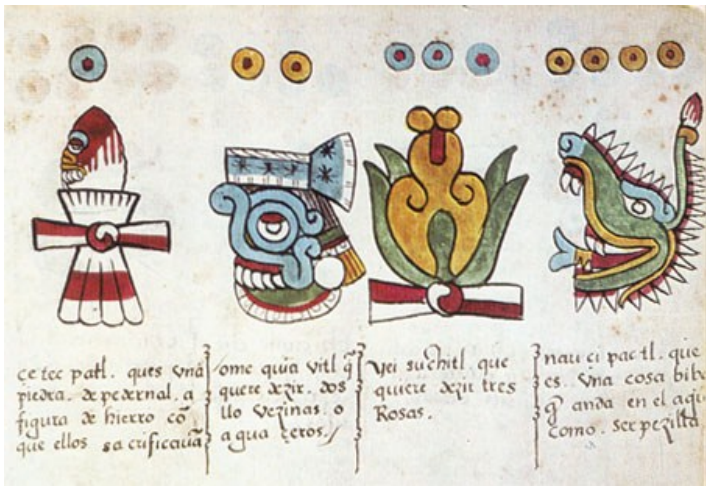
Theatre Jobs: Even though we only see three actors in the production, it takes a whole team of people to put a production together. The total number varies by production. Here's the list of those involved in the making of *The Sun Serpent*:

- 4 Actors
 - 1 Playwright
 - 1 Composer
 - 1 Dramaturg (deals mainly with research and development of plays)
 - 1 Director
 - 1 Choreographer
 - 2 Musicians (recorded)
 - 1 Production Manager (oversees production)
 - 1 Associate Production Manager
 - 7 Designers (scenic, costume, lighting, sound, puppets, masks, projections)
 - 1 Stage manager (runs rehearsals and performances)
 - 4 Backstage crew (light and sound operators, wardrobe/dresser, scene and prop assistance)
 - 11 Prop, Costume and Scene Shop Staff (carpenters, welders, painters, stitchers, cutters, crafters)
 - 12 Load-in/out crew (load scenery and lighting into and out of theatre space)
 - 18 Marketing, Education and Office Staff (all assist in the running of the company, promotion of our productions and educational outreach)
 - 14 Front of house, box office and facilities staff (house managers, ushers, ticket sales, volunteers)
- Grand Total: 80 people (give or take a few)



Costume and Mask design renderings by Connie Furr-Soloman
Top:
Malintzin/Aztec Dancer (left);
Aztec/Conquistador (right)
Middle:
Tlememe
Bottom:
Emperor

About the Aztec Codices: Long before the Spanish arrived in Mexico, the Aztecs made and loved books. Their stories were told pictorially, using images instead of text:



← The images on this page are actually the pictorial symbols of the Aztec language. The first symbol is a flint knife. The third is a flower and the fourth is a crocodile. The printed text underneath is a later Spanish translation.

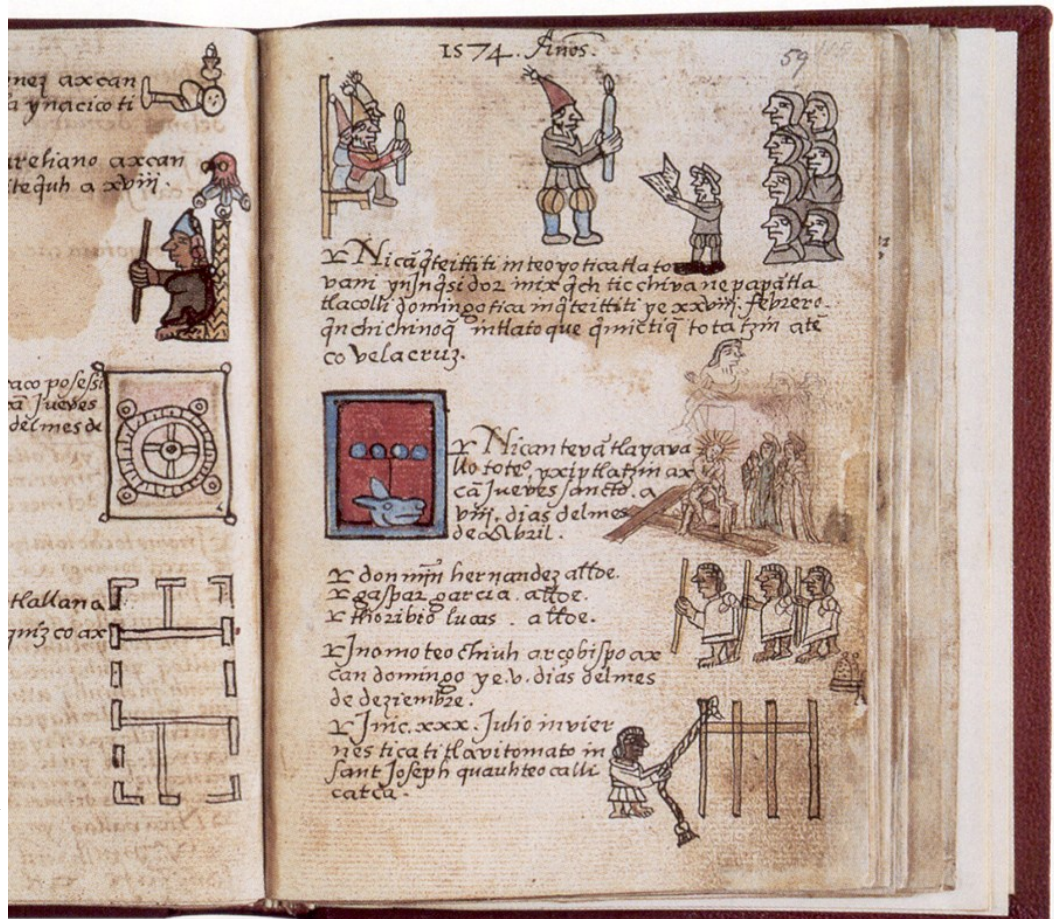


Most Aztec “books” were made of one long sheet, folded like an accordion. Any ancient book with a binding (as opposed to a scroll) is known as a codex.

Aztec Codices were used to record history and significant cultural and religious ideas such as the meaning of the Aztec calendars. →

During the Conquest, many Aztec books were burned by the Spanish. Why do you think the Spanish wanted to destroy the Aztec’s writings? Can you think of other examples of book burning throughout history?

After the Conquest, the Spanish trained Aztec scribes to write using the Latin alphabet and even to use Western styles of drawing and painting. They commissioned the scribes to create new codices describing Aztec life and history, using text as well as pictures. This melding of two different storytelling methods can be clearly seen in the Aubin codex: →



At the top of the page is 1572 Anōs – the Spanish word for year. The text below is written using the Latin alphabet, but the actual language is Nahuatl.

How are the images in this codex similar to the folded codex shown above? How are they different?

The development and design of *The Sun Serpent* was influenced by the codices. Look for these influences when you see the play. For more information and wonderful images go to:
www.river-styx.net/aztec-codex.htm