

T Z A Q I K

a tale, of many

Tzaqik, in the Mayan Ki'che': (v) to fall; to drop; to lose.

Tzaq: (n) ruin

Tzaqik | **a tale, of many** is a performative work written in multilingual verse by Jesús López Vargas, inspired by the Mayan myth of Xb'alanque, the moon twin god from one of the oldest American stories that survived the European colonization, the "Popol Vuh". We are presented with the story of a winged gentle deity doomed to watch the miseries, tragedies and laments of human kind, only one goal in mind: to find a cure for sadness.

Tzaqik is a contemporary mystical epic inspired by and dedicated to the many who fight for a better tomorrow, to the many seeking the light. **Tzaqik** tells and represents the tragedies, but most importantly, the **triumphs**, of various groups of marginalized peoples around the world and throughout history.

Rooted on various cultures and their myths and stories, *Tzaqik* aims to thrill and captivate its audiences by integrating contemporary multilingual verse, ever flowing music, stylized movement, and energetic choreography, along with intermedial visual designs, in order to compose and unforgettable live experience.

Tzaqik is told in an episodic format, staying loyal to the structure used by most epics around the world. The show is set in modern times and takes place "tonight". All dialogue, monologues, and lyrics are written in modern verse.

Tzaqik was set to premier in the Experimental Media Performance Lab (xMPL) at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) in March 2021 to a sold out opening weekend - however the COVID19 crisis forced the production to cancel all activity immediately two days before loading into the venue. Most of the production was archived on the last day of rehearsals but never saw its stage debu with its design and technical elements completed.

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THE STORY

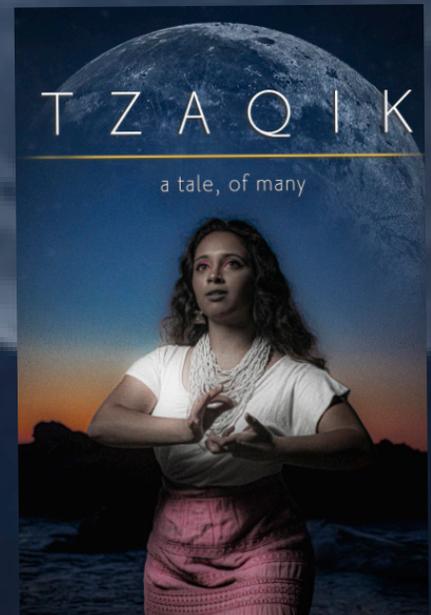
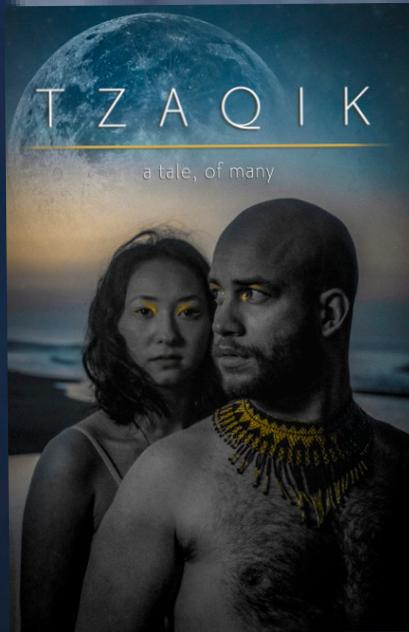
We begin the show in the moon with **Xb'alanque** praying in the form of song, crying out to all deities, asking for anyone's immediate help. We call this first section of the show "the Prologue". Through this initial scene we are also introduced to **Spítha**, Xb'alanque's movement choir, a group of dancers (7-11) who will play multiple roles throughout the development of the show - inspired by the greek chorus. It is important to note that part of Xb'alanque's journey is closely linked to language and the inability to speak what is on his mind, as he expresses best with his body at the top of the show. (*"Some of us can share as speech / what some can better say through silence. / Yet in a body where movement is both verse & logic, meaning can sprout further."* - Estro, the Prologue, pg.6)

We soon meet the deities & spirits, five brave individuals who listen to Xb'alanque's plea. These characters are subject to change depending on the casting, their devising to be worked during the initial stages of rehearsal. The roles will adapt to the culture & background of each actor cast. For the original production, the characters were **Ix-U** (a Mayan goddess of the moon), **Tato** (the spirit of an Afro-Puerto Rican philosopher), **Frija** (a Germanic goddess), **Aarushi** (a Southern Asia spirit of wishes), and **Estro** (an all-knowing culturally-ambiguous spirit, our leading deiti).

The Prologue presents Xb'alanque's past life as a hero (as told in the original text of the **Popol Vuh**), followed by an energetic sequence of dance and song depicting Xb'alanque's inner conflicts. Once Aarushi helps him speak his mind in English through an enchantment, he expresses a request: *"My wish: / To become one of them. / To be human again. / To feel as they feel, I am sure. / If sadness I wish to cure... // Then walk amongst them, you should."*

The Prologue concludes with a violent realization; in order to become human, Xb'alanque must renounce to being a God, and he must rip off his wings: *"To be reborn on Earth, / to walk amongst those who feel the pain / you resent, / Xb'alanque, thoughtful boy, you must die a little.... / To become human, from the heavens a God / must fall."* With his wings now removed, he jumps off the moon, a light show follows accompanied by a collage of voices and bodies in turbulence. Soon enough, we land on Earth, where the rest of the story will take place. Ix U & Tato are here assigned as Xb'alanque's guides & translators.

Some of the publicity collection for the 2020 Production



Tzaqik has an adaptable cast size. The original production had a cast of **15**.

A **minimum** cast consists of **13 performers**:

Xb'alanque, Soul, 5 deities (3 playing mortals later on), Spítha (made up of 7-11 dancers, *including* Soul).

The **ideal** cast consists of **16 performers**:

Xb'alanque, Soul, 5 deities, 3 mortals, Spítha (made up of 7 dancers, *including* Soul).

The largest cast would consist of up to **21 performers**:

Xb'alanque, Soul, 5 deities, up to 4 mortals, Spítha (made up of up to 11 dancers, *including* Soul).

THE STORY, CONTINUED

As mentioned earlier, the show is divided episodically - a total of 8 scenes and an epilogue make up the remaining of the show (for a total of 10 scenes total). The run time is of 90minutes.

Below is a short description of each scene as described on the program for our 2020 production followed by a short explanation on each scene's theme in bold:

— PIECE 1 —

"Now on Earth, Xb'alanque is guided to his first human tragedy, an ordinary building hiding inhumane secrets within its walls."

A piece about human trafficking.

— PIECE 2 —

"Xb'alanque journeys to a second human tragedy, a story of loss; here we also presence disrespect to the kindest of all Mothers."

A piece about ecology, war & motherhood.

— PIECE 3 —

"The Gods take action once again, this time helping Xb'alanque learn an indispensable truth about identity."

A piece about identity & the complications and limitations of language - Xb'alanque comes out as nonbinary and asks to be called Luna moving forward. The character of Soul is introduced as Luna's feminine side. Soul has no dialogue and is played by a dancer.

— PIECE 4 —

"We are led to our next stop, a collection of global stories about flight, belonging, freedom, and the cost of survival. What is the price of truth?"

This piece consists of 3 monologues by 3 refugees from across the world and across history. It culminates in an dangerous and selfish request by Luna, which leads to them losing their guides for the night.

— PIECE 5 —

"After the happenings in piece 4, one of our Gods decides to take a detour... Sometimes one must look at our youth in order to find unaltered truths."

A piece about mental health struggles/suicide & the importance of listening to our younger generations. sadness is vital to humans.

— PIECES 6 & 7 —

*“Our protagonists feels the Earth as it trembles beneath.
Each must first find their poem.”*

A climax of sorts - this piece begins with a God fight, followed by Spítha’s dance break mirroring Luna’s confusion expressed as a rap. Luna begins to understand that their goal cannot be - and should not be - achieved. The piece ends with Frija visiting Luna, explaining that sadness is vital to humans and their experiences.

— PIECE 8 —

“Faith.”

The show’s aparent conclusion, a celebration of music and dance, the deities all join Luna on Earth one last time. Luna makes the decision to remain human and to dedicate their time moving forward helping those who need it the most.

— EPILOGUE —

*“A lonely soul, a silent prayer,
the need for balance”*

The show seemingly over, we are back on Earth 5 years into the future. We see a mortal struggling through manipulation masked as love. Luna then joins the scene, not providing a solution, yet providing company, comfort and support.

NOTES ON THE DESIGN

The original production was very minimal when it came to the set, our only scenic elements consisted of a raked mount upstage - about 4 feet tall at its heighest - which served as a platform, and a triangular projection surface above this mount to symbolize the connection between Earth & Heavens. The triangle’s perimeter was also used by lighting instruments for specific moments.

Location, time & mood depended mostly on lighting & projections (both on the playing space from above, on the back wall, and on the triangle). A large part of the story telling relies on both lighting and projection.

Since the show is so heavily dependent on movement, the floor was covered in black marley dance floor and no performer wore shoes. Costumes also were picked and constructed to allow for movement, mainly for Xb’alanque/Luna, Soul, and the dancers in Spítha.

There is no orchestra needed for this production. Dimitri Soto - our composer - has produced and finalized all music files. A strong sound team is needed, however, as well as a strong sound designer, since there is sufficient action throughout the performance that benefits from audio support.

“**Tzaqik** is a lyrical, modern epic that challenges our perceptions of pain and suffering while examining the human condition through multicultural, historically informed perspectives. Told across several mediums of performance art while utilizing multiple languages, the show’s universal messages of solidarity and self-acceptance exist as strong juxtapositions to its heavy themes and dark source material. Community is the connective tissue that unites all pieces.

Primarily inspired by the mythology of the Mayan K’iche’ people - Popol Vuh (The Book of the People), **Tzaqik** has a deep understanding of the myths found in various ancient cultures and how they translate to modern struggles. It is billed as “a tale, of many” and immerses the audience in differing perspectives of various mythologies, cultures, and art forms. In doing so, the show is both a deconstruction of the human condition – linking experiences of pain and hope across cultures – and a celebration of diversity and identity. It asks us what it is to be human and then lets us find the answer over the course of a versatile night of art brought to life in excruciating detail.”

— HERMAN GOMEZ, DRAMATURGE | hermangomez.net

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

Tzaqik | a tale, of many was written to be multilingual, for it tells the stories of many across our world. And although the many might share ideas, experiences, fears and hopes, they do not necessarily share the same tongues. Differences are what makes us stronger as a global collective.

Differences do not diverge us, they complement us.

The use of verse was inspired by multiple stories passed down generation to generation through spoken word, in which rhythm & rhyme have eased their preservation throughout the years.

LINKS

Original Soundtrack - No Vocals Included: [LINK](#)

Original Production’s Program: [LINK](#)

Rehearsal Photos & Publicity Works: [LINK](#)

Rehearsal Video Samples: [LINK](#)