

A Conversation Between Emily Jackson and Alexis Scheer

Exploring Identity, Art, and Comedy in *Laughs in Spanish*

Emily Jackson: Hey, Alexis! Thanks so much for taking the time to chat today. How's everything going?

Alexis Scheer: Hi! Things are good. I'm actually on a bit of a road trip right now, so I'm at my parents' house in Florida. It's been a nice break.

Emily: That sounds amazing! Road trips are the best. So, I've been dying to talk to you about *Laughs in Spanish*. I'm so thrilled we're opening the season with it. Can you tell me a little about where this play came from?

Alexis: Sure! *Laughs in Spanish* was actually my grad school thesis. I was getting my MFA in playwriting at Boston University, and I was writing this play and *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord* at the same time. *Drug Lord* is really dark, so *Laughs in Spanish* became my happy place. It's a play full of joy and silliness, which was a nice balance for me.

Emily: I love that. The energy in *Laughs in Spanish* is so infectious. It feels like a party but also dives into these really deep questions about art and identity. What inspired you to set the play in Miami?

Alexis: I grew up in Miami, and my parents used to own a business in Wynwood, where the play is set. I saw that neighborhood change a lot over the years, especially with the rise of the art scene there. I was fascinated by the gentrification of the area, but I didn't want to write a straightforward gentrification play. Instead, I focused on the people who live in that world—artists, Latine communities—and explored what it means to create art in that space.

Emily: That's one of the things I love about the play. It's so vibrant and alive, but there's this underlying tension about who art is made for and who gets to make it. Those questions are so relevant, especially for our audience here at Kitchen Theatre Company.

Alexis: Absolutely. I think a lot of us, especially in the Latine community, grapple with those questions. When I was in grad school, I was really trying to reclaim authenticity in my writing. I had this preconceived idea of what a playwright was supposed to be—usually an older white man writing about New York living rooms—and I didn't see myself in that. With *Laughs in Spanish*, I wanted to write the world that I know, the world I come from.

Emily: It's interesting how that authenticity comes through in the play. It feels like a love letter to Miami but also a critique of the art world. And the characters are so rich and full of life. Can you talk a bit about how you approached writing them?

Alexis: The characters in *Laughs in Spanish* are definitely inspired by people I know or have encountered in Miami. I wanted to create a cast of characters who were all navigating their own identities and relationships with art. The play has this telenovela vibe, where everything is heightened and dramatic, but at the core, it's really about these people trying to figure out who they are and where they belong.

Emily: I love that telenovela style! It's so much fun, and it really pulls you into the story. We've been talking a lot about how to bring that energy to life in our production, especially in our space, which is a thrust stage. We want the audience to feel like they're part of the action, like they're in the gallery with these characters.

Alexis: That sounds perfect. The play really lends itself to that kind of immersive experience. It's fast-paced, with lots of entrances and exits, and the stakes are always high. I think audiences will enjoy feeling like they're right there in the middle of it all.

Emily: Definitely. And the themes of the play—identity, art, family—are so relatable. I know you've mentioned before that the relationship between Estella and Mariana is central to the play. Can you talk about that dynamic?

Alexis: Yes, the mother-daughter relationship between Estella and Mariana is really the heart of the play. Estella is trying to show Mariana that she's more than just a mother, that she's a whole person with her own dreams and desires. That's something I think a lot of people can relate to, especially women who are balancing career and family. It's about reclaiming your identity and not letting yourself be defined by just one role.

Emily: I find that so powerful, especially as someone who's a mother and in a leadership role. That struggle to balance different aspects of your identity is something I think about a lot. And I love how the play addresses that with both humor and insight.

Alexis: Humor is such an important tool for me as a writer. I love using comedy to explore deeper truths. With *Laughs in Spanish*, I wanted to create something that would make people laugh while also giving them something to think about. Laughter can be such a great way to open people up to new ideas.

Emily: I completely agree. The play is so much fun, but it also sparks important conversations. That's exactly what we aim to do at Kitchen Theatre Company. I'm so excited to see how our audience connects with it.

Alexis: Me too! I can't wait to hear what people think. I hope they find it engaging, entertaining, and that it gives them something to talk about long after they leave the theater.

Emily: I'm sure they will. *Laughs in Spanish* is the perfect way to kick off our season. Thanks so much for chatting with me, Alexis. I'm so looking forward to bringing this play to life with you.

Alexis: Thank you, Emily! It's been great talking to you. I'm excited to see how it all comes together.