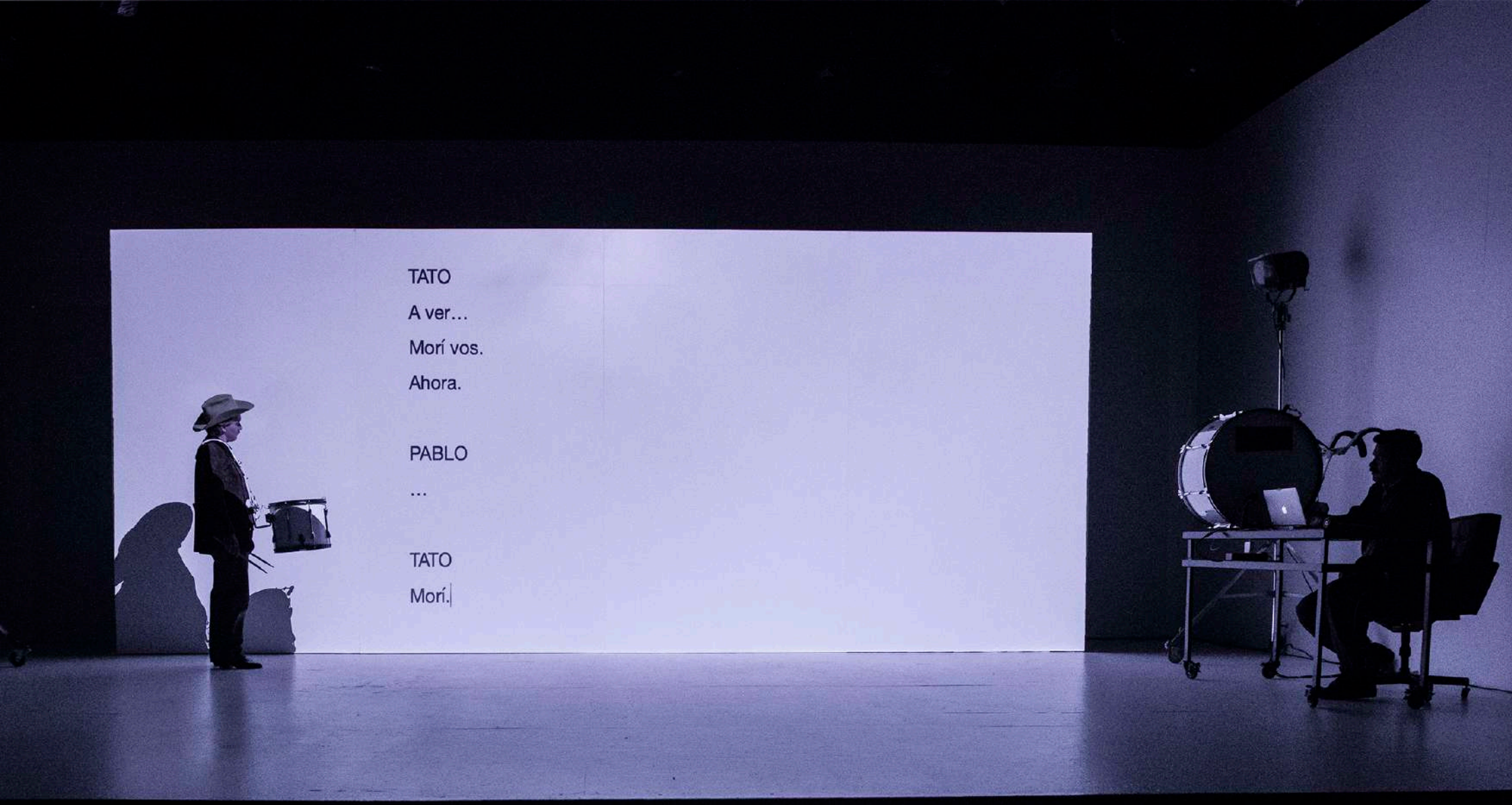
western:

chapters I, II and III

by martín flores cárdenas

If everything we evoke is fiction,
what about the things we don't know or we can't remember?
What about all that, out of shame or fear, was hidden from us
and yet, makes us who we are?

In this play, an Argentine playwright creates his past in real time.
To him, however, the past is something elusive,
a narrative continuously unfolding.


TATO
A ver…
Morí vos.
Ahora.
PABLO
…
TATO
Morí.

In ***Western***, a theatre director and playwright, creates his past in real time. Whatever he writes will be projected onto a white space—a virgin territory to be inhabited or conquered.

During ***Chapter I*** (which varies with each performance), the author investigates how that particular performance came about. How the audience came together, for that occasion in that venue. He reflects on theatre production systems and the limits of theatrical language, while questioning the origin of fiction and, by extension, his own origin as a creator. That text gives life to a cowboy—a symbolic figure that forces the author to confront several latent conflicts. Above all, it brings him face-to-face with a part of his history that his family had kept from him: his Native American ancestry.

In ***Chapter II***, the entire associative field previously unfolded converges into a narrative that is wildly queer, violent, and horrifying—a tale that will reveal a new origin to both the author and the audience.

Chapter III, currently in development, will deal with the aftermath of this project.

Martín Flores Cárdenas created and premiered his latest works (*No hay banda*, *Love Me*, and *La fuerza de la gravedad*) at Casa Teatro Estudio; creative projects and venue he once defined as "extensions of the self." The Museo Moderno and the Complejo Teatral de Buenos Aires invited him to premiere his next project away from home, challenging the capacity to expand his creative field. Fittingly enough, ***Western: chapter I and II*** is a work about dimensional borders, a search within the origins of creation.

"*To search for our origin is to pursue a wisdom that forever eludes our grasp. They say that, before the Big Bang, there was only a void; that time and space as we conceive them were born out of that singular phenomenon. But what was there before that? Something to which, it seems, we are denied entry. Something we lack the words for—or that we can only bring ourselves to call 'nothing'*." **MFC.**

Western The Western genre was born as the great foundational myth of the United States, a cinematic narrative designed to legitimize territorial expansion and the construction of national identity during the first half of the 20th century. In its classical stage, the genre operated under an absolute moral dualism: the cowboy represented civilization, law, and progress, while the untamed territory and indigenous communities embodied savagery and danger. Some films of this era consolidated this epic where violence was justified as a necessary evil to found a "prosperous and luminous" nation.

However, as the 20th century progressed, the certainties of the modern world began to crumble. The social wounds of the Vietnam War, political disillusionment, and the surge of human and civil rights movements in the 1960s and 1970s directly impacted the screen. The Western was forced to look at itself in the mirror. Directors such as John Ford in his late career (The Searchers, 1956) or Sam Peckinpah (The Wild Bunch, 1969) tore away the romantic facade of the frontier to expose underlying racism, greed, and colonialist cruelty. In parallel, from Europe, Sergio Leone's Spaghetti Western stripped the gunslinger of any patriotic mission, replacing him with cynical and amoral anti-heroes driven solely by survival and money.

At present, the genre has completed its mutation towards the so-called modern and revisionist Western. Far from the idealized plains, some films manage to demystify the act of killing, exposing it and cladding it in trauma. The contemporary Western no longer seeks to justify history, but to explore its wounds: it brings visibility to the perspectives of minorities, women on the frontier, and massacred indigenous peoples. Thus, the most American film genre of all went from being a tool for nationalist propaganda to becoming one of the most powerful and complex instruments for cultural self-criticism.

Identity In different parts of the world, the historical, political, and cultural process of colonialism and structural racism has meant death, atrocious violence, invisibilisation, and the violation of rights for indigenous populations. Sustained over time, this process generated the phenomenon of "identity denial", and due to shame or to avoid discrimination, many families stopped transmitting their indigenous heritage. In Argentina, more than half of the population has indigenous ancestry. However, according to a study by the UBA (University of Buenos Aires), only 2.9% recognize themselves as descendants.

Relevance The structural subjugation of indigenous rights constitutes a constant in Argentine history. However, the deregulation proposed by the current government deepens and institutionalizes this systematic abuse. In the name of the "free market", territory is detached from its sovereign dimension to operate strictly as a commodified financial asset, thereby reactivating the matrix of colonial plunder in the absolute present. Although the current protective legal framework was historically applied with bureaucratic neglect, it functioned at least as the last line of judicial defense to safeguard territorial roots. By dismantling those limits, indigenous families are left defenseless against transnational corporations that transform life into a cold market transaction. The State, once again, ensures that international private property rules over the ancestral bond with the land. While the underlying violence does not change, its speed, its global scale, and the total isolation of indigenous peoples in the face of the advance of corporate fencing certainly do.

Martín Flores Cárdenas is an Argentine director and playwright. His texts have been translated into several languages and have premiered and received awards in Argentina, France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Portugal, Poland, Greece, Brazil, Uruguay, and Chile. Among his most prominent works are "*Catedral*", "*Quienquiera que hubiera dormido en esta cama*", "*Mujer armada hombre dormido*", "*Entonces bailemos*", and "*Entonces la noche*". He frequently collaborates with other artists across various disciplines. He supervised the creative process for Marina Otero's "*Fuck Me*" and "*Kill Me*", and he co-wrote and co-directed "*Love Me*". Additionally, he continues to perform his solo show, "*No hay banda*" (2021), which has been touring festivals and theaters throughout Latin America and Europe. In 2023, he premiered "*La fuerza de la gravedad*"; these last three works were created in and opened at *Casa Teatro Estudio (Buenos Aires)*, a little venue he directs and manages alongside the Brazilian set designer Ruslan Alastair Silva. Last year, at the Teatro Sarmiento of the Complejo Teatral de Buenos Aires, he premiered "*Western: chapter I and II*"—his most recent project, with a third chapter set to debut in the near future.

AUTOR
Hagamos lo siguiente:
yo le doy al bombo
y vos caé
como si hubieras recibido
un disparo.
se prepara para recibir un disparo.

A MUST-SEE!

*"The **harsh charm** with which he invites us into a private universe; the confirmation that every performance is **unique, distinct, and new**. The handling of the material summons two seemingly antagonistic elements: it is **ruthless and tender at the same time**."*

Pedro Fernández Moujan (Farsa Mag).

*"**A masterful exercise in writing and a remarkable physical display.** The staging is innovative and captivating. It invites us to contemplate the unprecedented. And to think about whatever we do in a different way. The play proposes that we pause for a moment, stopping to think, or to feel and breathe"* **Sergio Elguezbal (Radio de la Ciudad).** *video*

"It is daring, brave… *It draws a parallel between the Conquest of the West and the Conquest of the Green Desert. And that dramatic plot twist at the end—wildly queer, that **decoloniality**, the shift triggered within the protagonist by such a horrifying, primal, and historical asymmetry —it leaves you with the feeling that the play has achieved everything".* **(Radio con vos).**

“*Stripping theatricality down to a zero degree* *and calling performance itself into question—suppressing it until the actors become an image dissociated from the very words their bodies take on.* ***A stimulus for the imagination****”.* **Alejandra Varela (Página 12).**

“A marvel. I can’t stop talking about this play. I was blown away *by how simple yet powerful it is.”* **Santiago Mitre (film director).**

“*The director’s force is palpable**.*** *It is a must-see on the Buenos Aires theater scene right now.”* **Gabriela Rádice (La TV Pública).** video

“Flores Cárdenas creates this device by defying categories in a radical gesture that nullifies voices, places the text at the center of the stage, and sets everything spinning around it. A past that finds new meaning and reveals what was hidden: ***something of that otherness is also his own, it also constitutes him: the other, is also himself.”***
Luciana Martínez Bayón (Teatro en criollo).

“This is his most striking work. On stage, Martín decides who he wants to be. ***I found it deeply moving.”*** **Cecilia Roth (actress).**

“*An open-air construction. He lays out his search before the* ***audience/readers*** *in an absolute present. An opportunity for those curious enough to venture into the tunnel of a creative process* ***riddled with associations, references, and, above all, interrogations.“***
Leni González (La Nación).

“It is simply wonderful—both for its subject matter and its presentation—always sustained by that ***intimate fiber*** *Flores Cárdenas brings to his stories.* ***He achieves an unusually profound sense of intimacy and emotion. An excellent narrator*** *who can turn an anecdote into a political reflection while venturing into a strange landscape in which one immediately feels involved. Flores Cárdenas insists that no,* ***Western*** *is not a play. But that it is theater, there is no doubt****”***
Marta Casale (El Espectador Compulsivo).

On stage **Pablo Ragoni, Martín Flores Cárdenas** / Set Design **Ruslan Alastair Silva /** Lighting Design **Matías Sendón** / Costume Design **Lara Sol Gaudini** / Original Score and Sound design **Diego Vainer** / Chapter III theme **Ramiro Vergara** / Video Design **Pablo Camaití** / Percussion Coach **Luciano Scalera** / Choreographic Consultant **Marina Otero** / Research Collaboration **Diana Lenton** / Artistic Asisstant Marcos Krivocapich / Artistic and Choreographic Assistant **Bernardita Epelbaum** / Booking and Touring **t4** y **Eliana Staiff** / Text and Direction **Martín Flores Cárdenas**

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Trailer

Fotos

Chapter I *was presented as a preview at the* ***Museo Moderno de Buenos Aires****.* ***Chapters I and II*** *at the* ***Teatro Sarmiento*** *and at* ***Fundación Cazadores****. Now,* ***Al Oeste*** *returns to its place of creation for the premiere of* ***Chapter III****.*

Upcoming shows:

6, 7 y 8/08/26 Fundación Cazadores - Buenos Aires, Argentina

18 y 19/9/26 FIBA - Festival Internacional de Buenos Aires (Museo Moderno) - Argentina

29/10/26 Festival Plataforma - Santander, España

31/10 y 01/11/26 Réplika Teatro - Madrid, España

FITEI 2027 - Oporto, Portugal

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