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## Interview: Bernardo Cubría of **CRABS IN A BUCKET** at Echo Theater Company

A playwright describes the meaningful background to his crab-themed play

By Andrew Child



Although a reflection and a response to his own relationship with the theatre, Bernardo Cubría hopes his newest play, *Crabs in a Bucket* will reflect “larger themes than what it means to be a theatre person” and laughingly wishes that even people he hasn’t personally invited will come to see its premiere at The Echo Theater Company. The title alludes to the metaphor about ‘crab mentality’ in which disenfranchised populations fight each other to escape their oppression, pressing upon each other as stepping stools but never questioning the reason for their entrapment as a collective. Cubría’s play, which began as a satire of a system that makes him incredibly sad, seeks to illustrate and explore the metaphor literally. Actors play crabs who truly are trapped in a bucket.

When he sat down to write the first draft five years ago, Cubría recalls, “I was thinking about the crab mentality conversation in the Latinx theatre community. Who creates the system where one person makes it so no one else can get big?” The story quickly escaped any insular confines and addressed broadly universal themes, “What happens when bitterness and resentment win out? We are all idealistic at some point but then resentment settles in.”

Cubría thoughtfully reflects on how his perceptions of his own crab characters have shifted over the years. Where he originally wrote Amargo, a jaded and (for lack of a better word) crabby protagonist as a reflection of his own mentality, he now views the character as a tragic figure. After having kids of his own and an upturn in opportunities, he feels much more aligned with the young, idealistic crab in the piece. “When I was 18 years old, I thought I could change the face of American theatre. What happened to that? I want to reconnect to that version of myself.”

Amidst the WGA strike and news of theatres struggling to stay open nationwide, Cubría feels lucky to have his work being produced right now. “Theatre is my first love, and I view this play as a love letter to the Latine/ Latinx theatre community.”

It will be interesting to see how LA audiences respond to this zany play which is clearly full of heart at its core.