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# 'The Yellow Brick Road' Latin kids' musical riffs off 'The Wizard of Oz,' sings about identity



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Dora (Virginia Cavaliere) and the Scarecrow (Ryan Duncan) in 'The Yellow Brick Road.'

Emerald City, as we know, is the spot for finding a brain, a heart, courage and a sense of home.

And story ideas.

The new salsa-flavored kids musical "The Yellow Brick Road," launching on Tuesday, joins the roster of riffs on "The Wizard of Oz."

That ever-growing list includes "The Wiz" and "Wicked" and the in-the-works [James Franco-Mila Kunis](#) movie, "Oz, the Great and Powerful."

Presented by Theatreworks USA, the plot of the show at the [Lucille Lortel](#) in the Village mirrors the original story of a girl's self-discovery, but this time to a modern Latin beat.

The action follows 15-year-old [Dora Inez Garza](#), who lives in [Chicago](#). She's torn between her Mexican heritage and being an American teenager, according to co-author [Mando Alvarado](#), who lives in [Williamsburg](#) and grew up in a border town in [South Texas](#).

He admits that retelling a beloved story was "daunting. You want it to stand on its own."

Timely national concerns about immigration informed his take on the classic tale.

"The idea of home," he continues, "became an issue of identity — the central issue became about knowing who you are and where you come from."

"Dora is embarrassed about who she is, which is a typical state for adolescents," says [Virginia Cavaliere](#), who plays Dora. "She's searching for answers, like every teenager."

She's grappling with old-school traditions and new ways. Her benchmark 15th birthday makes that struggle a priority.

A curandera, a woman who practices folk medicine, sees Dora rebelling against her quinceañera and sends her to Oz to deal with her conflicted feelings.

Dora dances down the you-know-what to you-know-where to the beat of mambo and merengue-infused songs by [Jaime Lozano](#) and [Tommy Newman](#), who also worked on the book.

There, right on cue, she meets Scarecrow ([Ryan Duncan](#)), who can't keep English and Spanish straight; Tino ([Frank Viveros](#)), a walking-talking food cart made from tin who lacks passion, and a Mountain Lion ([Cedric Leiba Jr.](#)) with zero faith in himself.

The trio represents Dora and the way shes thinks about herself, explains Viveros.

The show's lesson? "You don't have to define yourself as one thing or the other," Viveros says.

In other words, you can be arroz con pollo one minute and Chicago-style deep-dish pizza the next.

Dora confronts that idea in a song called "Way Out There." In it, she imagines searching for a sense of home and who she is that goes beyond dreams and beyond borders.

"Home," says Cavaliere, "can be anywhere."

## YOU SHOULD KNOW

"The Yellow Brick Road" runs Tues.-Aug. 19 at the [Lucille Lortel Theatre](#), 121 Christopher St. Tickets: Free on a first-come, first-served basis in-person at the box office on the day of the show. (212) 279-4200; theatreworks.org.

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