

# The Yellow Brick Road

nytheatre.com review

[Rohana Elias-Reyes](#) · July 24, 2011

From the moment the theater darkens and the announcer requests you turn off your cell in Spanglish, you know Theatreworks' 2011 free summer production *The Yellow Brick Road* isn't set in Kansas anymore. Inspired by L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful*



*Pictured:* Ryan Duncan, Virginia Cavaliere, Cedric Leiba Jr. and Frank Viveros in a scene from *The Yellow Brick Road* (photo © Jeremy Daniel)

*Wizard of Oz*, this updated, urbanized, and Latin-flavored version also takes plot points (and ruby slippers) that are found in MGM's 1939 classic film, but not the original book. Instead of Dorothy searching for a rainbow and escape from her colorless Kansas farm, we adventure through Oz with Dora, a Mexican-American city girl trying to escape her Spanish-speaking relatives and the *quinceañera* (a traditional 15-year-old coming of age party) they insist she celebrate.

A magical birthday gift from a local *curandera* sends Dora on a trip down *el camino amarillo*; a song, dance and humor filled, occasionally tongue-in-cheek drive-by of recognizable Latin cultural references. Glinda the Good becomes Carnival Gloria, a Carmen Miranda-esque 1940s Brazilian carnival queen; La Bruja's (the witch's) costume resides somewhere between Flamenco and voodoo priestess, complete with castanets of power; and there are numerous references to various types of Latin music and foods with origins from Cuba to Argentina and beyond. There are also vocabulary lessons (*cerebro* is brain, *cabeza* is head, *espejo* is mirror) and life lessons (*si es importante para ti, es importante para mi*). Along the road Dora picks up the expected Scarecrow; but the Tin Woodsman is replaced by the Iron Chef, a metal chef who needs to learn to cook with *corazon*; and the Cowardly Lion becomes a "puny puma." Oddly, with the entire range of Latin music to work with (and frequently referred to in the book and lyrics), no fantastic *paso doble*, tango, or salsa numbers materialize—just a few steps here and there. In the end, Dora learns to embrace her Mexican heritage and her ruby *zapatillas* while holding on to her American teenager identity. In her dance-off with La Bruja, Beyoncé and Michael Jackson moves get equal time with salsa and merengue.

*The Yellow Brick Road* is lots of fun, the pop-infused Spanish influenced songs are catchy, the cast is fantastic, and it is free—but there is that pesky little man behind the curtain. Although Theatreworks is giving away thousands of tickets this summer, most are distributed to summer camps. Only a small number are made available to individuals, and these cannot be reserved. If you can, plan for the Thursday 6:00 p.m. or Sunday 2:00 p.m. performances, camps don't come at these times—but you will have to stand in line for at least an hour before curtain for the ticket giveaway (four per adult). If your kids can handle the wait, *The Yellow Brick Road* is worth it, they'll love watching feisty Dora sing and dance her way through Oz with her little chihuahua Gypsy, and they might even learn a thing or two about Hispanic culture.

**Opened:** July 27, 2011

**Closes:** August 19, 2011

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## Show Info

**Synopsis:** A new salsa and merengue-infused musical for kids and families, inspired by *The Wizard of Oz*.

[More Info...](#)

**Venue:** [Lucille Lortel Theatre](#)

**Running Time:** 1 hour; no intermission

**Prices:** FREE

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## Ticketing Info

[Online Ticketing](#)

**Tickets On Sale Thru:** August 19, 2011

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## Artists Involved

**Cast:** Virginia Cavaliere, Lexi Rhoades, Natalie Toro, Ryan Duncan, Frank Viveros, Cedric Leiba Jr.

**Book By:** Mando Alvarado and Tommy Newman

**Music & Lyrics By:** Jaime Lozano and Tommy Newman

**Director:** Devanand Janki

**Costumes:** Sydney Maresca

**Lighting:** Jeff Croiter

**Sets:** Roger Hanna

**Sound:** Carl Casella

**Puppets:** Lake Simons

**Orchestrations:** Salomon Lerner and Jaime Lozano

**Choreography:** Devanand Janki and Robert Tatad

**Producer:** Theatreworks/USA

**Production Stage Manager:** Bryon F. Abens