

RUBEN CARBAJAL – PRESS KIT

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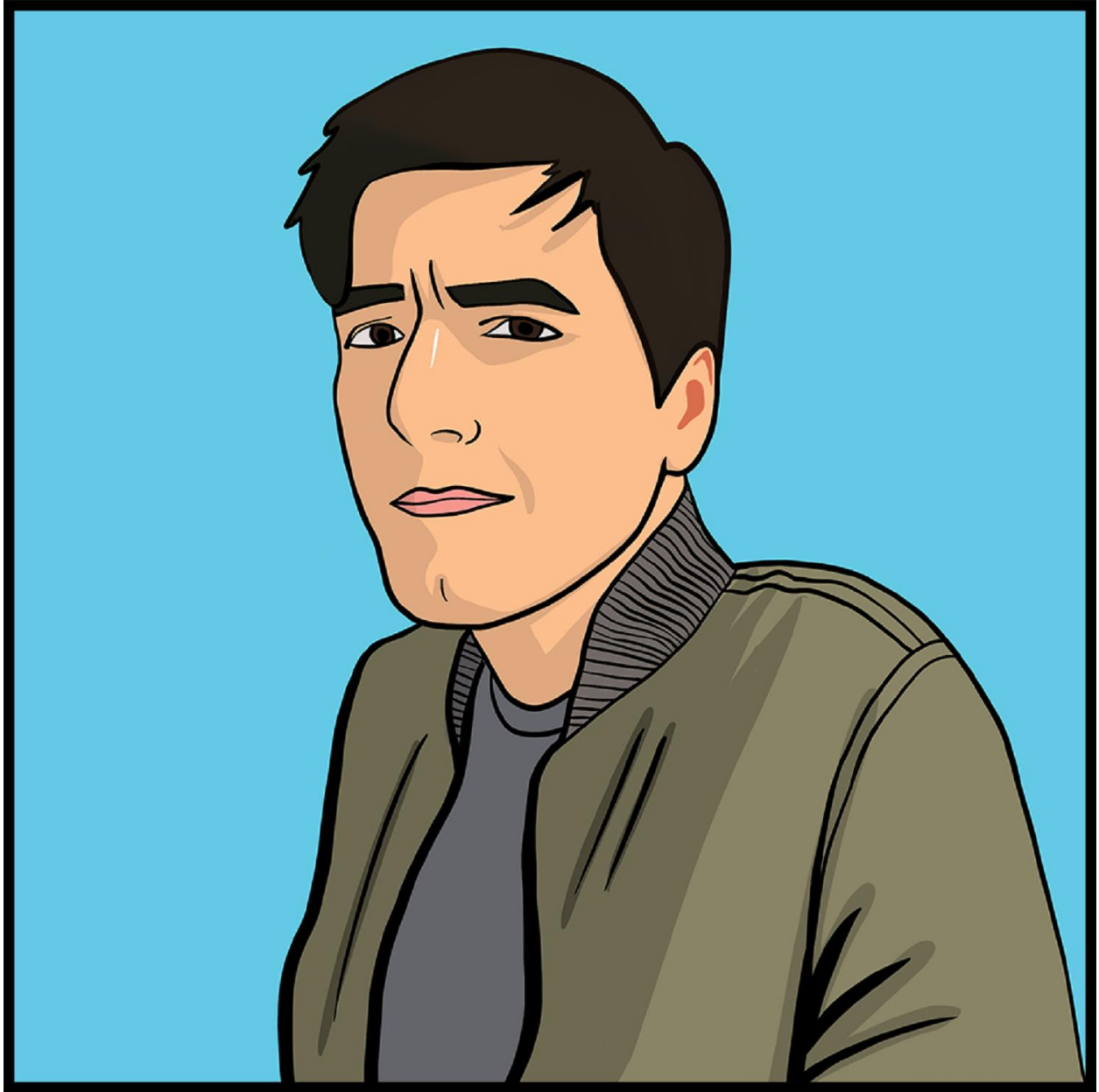


Illustration by Gayle Carbajal

RUBEN CARBAJAL - BIOS

(LONG)

Ruben is likely best known for his high-school comedy ***The Gifted Program*** (DPS), bringing teen-angsty laughs nationwide for over two decades. He was a Waterworks Festival finalist with ***A Play with a Door***, soon to appear in ***The Best Women's Stage Monologues of 2025***. His award-winning audio dramas include ***Something in the Air*** (Sundog's Originals Project, Bluebird Theatre) and ***You Can Thank Me Later*** (Marion Thaurer Brown Award). His latest published short plays, ***Some Assembly Required***, ***A Place to Rest Your Head***, and ***The Law of the Instrument***, are featured in anthologies released by Stage Partners.

You'll also find his stage work in collections like ***One Minute Plays***, ***The Best Stage Monologues***, ***105 Five Minute Plays***, ***The Covid Monologues***, and many others.

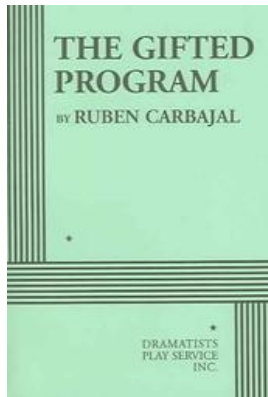
His offbeat career as a creative journeyman has found him doing everything from developing a live-action sci-fi pilot for Nickelodeon, leading a writing room at Awesomeness TV, naming brand-new companies, speechwriting for celebrities and CEOs, and traveling the world as a segment writer for the NBA. What connects them all is a love for solving creative challenges and finding the narrative hook with the power to transform audiences.

He recently moved to a Lansing, New York, where he lives with his goth-spinning DJ wife, Gayle.

(SHORT)

Ruben's best known for ***The Gifted Program*** (DPS), bringing teen-angsty laughs nationwide for over two decades. He was a 2024 Waterworks Festival finalist with ***A Play with a Door***, soon-to-be-excerpted in ***The Best Women's Stage Monologues***. His award-winning audio dramas include ***Something in the Air*** (Sundog's Originals Project), and ***You Can Thank Me Later*** (Marion Thaurer Brown Award). His shorts, ***Some Assembly Required***, ***A Place to Rest Your Head***, and ***The Law of the Instrument***, are available via Stage Partners. You'll also find him in ***105 Five Minute Plays***, ***The Covid Monologues*** and ***One Minute Plays***, among many other best-of anthologies.

RUBEN CARBAJAL, SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY



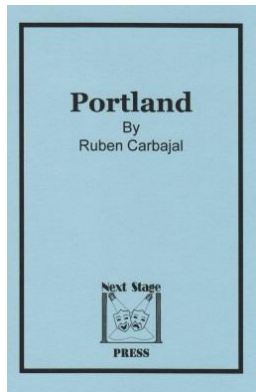
THE GIFTED PROGRAM (Full-Length Play)

"Carbajal's humor alternates between lacerating and indulgent, and never slackens." --The New Yorker

"Perhaps none of us were recluses in the gifted program, but we can all relate to the issues of adolescence that The Gifted Program evokes so well."

--The Columbia Daily Spectator

At Washington High in the year 1985, four of the school's smartest and least-popular kids struggle day-to-day, finding escape through basement sessions of Dungeons & Dragons. But when a radio request show turns a private crush public, the simple pursuit of an education becomes a true fight for survival.

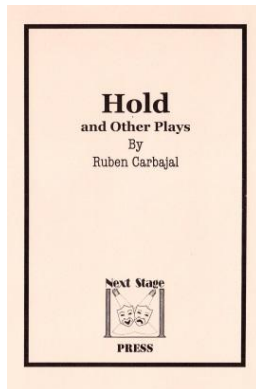


PORTLAND (One-Act Play)

Winner of the Armstrong Atlantic One Act Festival

"...The language is so rich, so deep, and so full of complex emotions that I was in tears by the end. This play will break your heart, and you will be glad for the experience. Absolutely beautiful." --Daniel Guyton (*Attic, Hilarious Nightmares*)

Ed, a young man adrift in life, moves into a small apartment with Li, his ex-lover. Ed's awkward encounters as a room service waiter punctuate the ambiguous intimacy with his roommate, as their murky past and true feelings slowly come clear.



HOLD & Other Short Plays (One-Act Collection)

"In just 25 minutes, Ruben Carbajal's HOLD is able to make you laugh and think about your life." —Review Fix

Surreal, unflinching and darkly comic, this collection of award-winning short plays cover everything from the menace of customer service phone calls to visions of a world bereft of books. In between there's an existential horse, New Yorkers confronting death, morally bankrupt (but comically rich) suburbanites, and a man in a high-flying lawn chair who may be a hero or a lunatic.

ANTHOLOGIES:

The Best Women's Monologues (2025, Smith & Kraus)
The Best Men's Monologues of 2024 (2024, Smith & Kraus)
QUEST! (2024, Stage Partners)
TEN(ISH) Horror (2024, Stage Partners)
TEN(ISH) Comedies (2023, Stage Partners)
The Covid Monologues (2022, Breath of Fire LTE)
105 5 Minute Plays (2017, Smith & Krauss)

One-Minute Plays (Routledge, 2017)
We Just Clicked (2016, Freshwater Press)
Monologues from Next Stage Press (2015, Next Stage Press)
The Best Men's Monologues of 2005 (2006, Smith & Kraus)
More Scenes and Monologues from the Best New Plays (2006, Meriwether)
Outstanding Men's Monologues Volume 2 (2006, DPS)

SELECTED PRODUCTIONS / ACHIEVEMENTS

Some Assembly Required (Currently 32 productions licensed worldwide by Stage Partners)

Nothing to Lose, Sundog Theatre -Scenes from Staten Island Ferry Festival (2024)

One Lap Too Many, Bluebird Theatre Salon, Brooklyn NY (2024, Reading)

A Play with A Door – LiveArts Waterworks Festival Selection, Charlottesville, VA (2024)

A Play with A Door – Bluebird Theatre Salon, Brooklyn, NY (2024, Reading)

Guided Meditation – Coalitionworks 8 (2024, Online Publication)

Epitaph – Published in UK's TYPE! Zine (2024)

HOLD – Thesis Production, Hamilton College (2023)

Something in the Air – Bluebird Theatre (2023– Online Podcast Premiere)

Something in the Air – Sundog Theatre (2023 – Maker Park Radio NYC, Radio Broadcast)

The Button Pushers – Soundscape Theatre (2023 – Streaming Premiere)

Several One-Minute Plays – Gi60 International Festival (2022 – The Tank Theatre, NYC)

Sparrowfall, Firecracker Productions (2022 – Streaming Premiere)

Nothing Ever Happens – DeFrenti Productions (2021 – Online Premiere)

The Last Song – Breath of Fire Latina Theatre Ensemble – The Covid Monologues (2020 - Online & Publication)

20 Questions – Jeremy Schwartz's Monologue Challenge (Online - 2020)

You Can Thank Me Later – Centerstage - Theatre Magic (Online -2020)

Forgive Me Cosmo, For I Have Sinned – Talking Horse's Original Monologue Contest (Online -2020)

Imagine – The Sauk's Living Room Series (Online – 2020)

A Craigslist Play – Downtown Urban Arts Festival, New York, NY (2020)

A Craigslist Play – The Sauk, Jonesville, MI (2020)

Unfollow – Stage Left, Spokane, WA (2020)

Burning Airlines Gives You So Much More - Over Our Heads Players, Racine WI (2020)

The Gifted Program - The Statesmen Theatre, Falls Church, VA (2020)

Resistance is Futile – Gi60 International Play Festival (2019 – UK & NYC)

The Button Pushers - Greenhouse Productions, New York, NY (2017)

Alien - No Peeking Theatre, Jersey City, NJ (2017)

The Craigslist Play - Freshwater Theatre, Minneapolis, MN (2016)

Commission - Panto Christmas Play - Colonial Williamsburg (2015)

The Button Pushers - Pick of the Vine, San Pedro, CA (2014)

The Button Pushers - Minnesota Shorts Fest, Mankato, MN (2013)

The Button Pushers, Snowdance Festival, Racine, WI (2013)

The Gifted Program - Freshwater Theatre, Minneapolis, MN (2013)

The Last Reader of Books, Hobo Robo Festival, Chicago, IL (2013)

The Last Reader of Books, Senses Askew, New York, NY (2013)

Commission and production, The Wounded Jogger, UMass-Lowell (2013)

Subdivision, premieres at Chicago's Gorilla Tango Theatre in August (2010)

HOLD, winner of the 2010 Coastal Empire New Play Festival, Savannah, GA

HOLD presented at the 2009 Queens Players One-Act Festival, Queens, NY

Portland, winner of the 2009 Coastal Empire New Play Festival, Savannah, GA

Stalker produced at Madair Productions' Project Playwright, New York City (2008)

AWARDS & HONORS

Monday, Semifinalist-The Playground Experiment's Faces of America Monologue Festival (2024)

Nothing to Lose, Sundog Theatre's Scenes from Staten Island Festival Selection

A Play with a Door, 2024 LiveArts Waterworks Festival Finalist

Something in the Air, 2023 Sundog Theatre - The Original's Project Winner

Burning Airlines Give You So Much More, 2020 Snowdance Festival, Finalist

A Craigslist Play, Urban Arts Festival Selection, 2020

You Can Thank Me Later, 2019 Marion Thauer Brown Audio Scriptwriting Award

Moment Before Impact, 2014 Gone In 60 Seconds International Play Festival - Best Play of the Decade

The Button Pushers, 2018 Minnesota Shorts Festival – Best of the Fest Selection

Semi-Finalist, Walt Disney Fellowship

Artist-In-Residence, Millay Colony

Artist-In-Residence, Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey

LINKS

[Official Website](#)

[New Play Network \(Recent & unpublished plays\)](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Threads](#)

Ruben Carbajal: Artistic Statement (an ongoing project)

1

If all is right, the play is the statement.

2

If an essay can explain your play, you should've written an essay.

3

Plays are roadmaps to unfamiliar territory.

4

Plays are not answers; they're questions.

5

What aren't we talking about? is a good place to start.

6

Hearing audiences laugh at something I wrote is one of my favorite sounds.

7

Even better: making audiences laugh at what they don't want to think about.

8

I ask myself: what can I give audiences that no other writer can offer?

9

More mileage out of fewer words.

10

Also: how much can I express on the smallest possible canvas?

11

Some things that have inspired my plays:

Transcripts of Air traffic controllers

The dog that mauled me as a child

September 11th

My paralyzing depression

Conversations with customer service reps
Auto accidents
Google searches
Craigslist
The need to be hopeful
A rocking chair
Recurring nightmares
Lynching postcards
The ambiguous moans from my neighbor's apartment
Covid 19
Bigfoot hunters

12

If someone envisions a play in their head as they read it, it's not unproduced.

13

As long as there are humans, theater will never go away. But how much longer will we have humans?

14

I write plays for people who hate theatre. I understand the sentiment. And what they're missing.

15

Writing a play is listening to something happen inside you. I step aside and take notes.

16

A full-length play is any play that is realized fully. It could be half a page or 600.

17

It's a slight exaggeration, but with nearly every new play, I must learn how to write all over again.

18

Some plays can't be explained. They can only be experienced.

19

Not knowing what's going on in real life is terrifying. In theatre, it's divine.

20

I try to avoid repeating myself, but I'm not always successful.

I try not to repeat myself.

21

I don't fully understand what drives me to create plays. It's likely the expression of an experience or emotion that can't get out any other way.

22

Sometimes, the playwright doesn't fully understand their own play. That's okay.

23

Some plays are written to exorcise a demon. Sometimes, they merely memorialize the demon.

24

Theatre is always dying while remaining immortal.

25

If someone can succinctly describe a play in a few capsule sentences, it's a bad sign.

26

It's ideal if no one can agree on what your play is about.

27

When people asked Edward Albee what his play was about, he'd answer: about two hours and fifteen minutes.

28

I don't know what I'm doing. If I did, writing would be less engaging for me and my audience.

29

I'm like a nerve ending attached to a keyboard, processing my feelings by assembling words.

30

Stories written by AI are just the thing for Artificially Intelligent audiences to enjoy.

31

Human-made plays for humans.

32

Empathy and human connection are two things we desperately need. Theatre is one of the best delivery systems for both.

33

A play records the dynamics of interpersonal collisions. The characters aren't the same people they were when the play began. Hopefully, neither is the audience.

34

Absurdism is just a deeper, truer level of realism.

35

I was raised by two impoverished teenagers. Because I was loved and encouraged to run freely with my imagination, I never knew we didn't have much.

--As of 5.11.2025