

Facing fear with love in  
***THE BRIEF WONDROUS  
 LIFE OF OSCAR WAO***

by **Junot Díaz**

Adapted and directed by **Elise Thoron**

Performed by **Elvis Nolasco**

April 19—May 6, 2018

**Updated April 2018**

**Press Contact**

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SEATTLE, Wash.—March 20, 2018—Starting next month, Book-It Repertory Theatre is hosting Literature to Life/Young Audiences New York to present a stage adaptation of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. This 2008 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel written by **Junot Díaz** was adapted and directed for the stage by **Elise Thoron** and will be performed by **Elvis Nolasco** (“American Crime”, “She’s Gotta Have It”). This collaboration across the coasts is the first time Book-It has hosted another company in its 28-year history.



The story chronicles Oscar de León, an overweight Dominican boy growing up in Paterson, New Jersey, who is fascinated with sci-fi, fantasy novels, and falling in love. Oscar is also obsessed with a curse that has plagued his family for generations. In a virtuosic performance, Nolasco plays over 20 characters, including Oscar and Oscar’s

athletic roommate and the narrator of the piece, Yunior.

The show has been dazzling audiences on the East Coast for years. Díaz says the adaptation “cracked the code” of his fun, complex novel. Díaz’ use of Spanish slang and historical footnotes detailing the history of the Dominican Republic and cruelty of the dictator Trujillo’s reign throughout the novel comes alive on stage.

“To work with Book-It after all these years of pursuing similar missions on opposite coasts is like discovering you have family that you were aware of but never got to meet. And then when you do, they turn out to be terrific! Collaborating with Book-It on *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* is an amazing opportunity to share experience with artists who are passionate about books and know the challenges of adaptation for the stage. It’s like coming home,” says Thoron.

The performance runs 85 minutes with no intermission. In collaboration with Literature to Life, each performance will feature a short pre- and post-performance discussion. For information or to arrange interviews, please contact Communications Manager Val Brunetto at [valb@book-it.org](mailto:valb@book-it.org).

The design team is led by Scenic Designer **Catherine Cornell**, along with lighting design by **Thorn Michaels**, sound design by **Kyle Thompson**, and properties design by **Emily Sershon**.

*The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* plays **April 19—May 6, 2018** (Opening/Press Night on April 21) at **The Center Theatre at the Armory** (305 Harrison Street, Seattle, WA 98109). Performance tickets start at \$26 with group rates available. \$15 tickets will be available to students during the entire run with valid school ID. Purchase at [book-it.org](http://book-it.org) or by calling the box office at 206.216.0833. The box office is open Tues through Fri, 12:00pm – 5:00pm (Tues – Sat during production run), located in the outer lobby of The Center Theatre at the Armory, 305 Harrison St., Seattle.

*The show contains mature content including strong language, slurs, and references to suicide.*

#### **ABOUT LITERATURE TO LIFE/YOUNG AUDIENCES NEW YORK**

**Literature to Life** presents vibrant verbatim adaptations of award-winning works of contemporary American literature, each performed by a single actor. These adaptations tell a complete story by drawing directly on key dramatic moments from the author's text. These works encourage conversation and self-discovery. After a Literature to Life performance, audiences of all ages leave inspired to explore the book's meaning in their own lives. Literature to Life is often accompanied by facilitated discussion, workshops, and residencies in classrooms, where students learn to write and perform their own stories. Literature to Life is performed in theaters, schools, shelters, libraries, and prisons across the United States. Founded over twenty years ago at the award winning **American Place Theatre** by artistic director Wynn Handman and Elise Thoron, Literature to Life is now a program of **Young Audiences New York (YANY)**, whose mission for the past sixty-five years is to give students access to their own creativity and improve communities through the arts.

#### **ABOUT ELVIS NOLASCO**

Soon after receiving formal training, Elvis was cast in the hit comedy *I Like It Like That* with Lauren Valez and Rita Moreno. Elvis was then cast by Spike Lee for the film *Clockers* with Mekhi Phifer and Delroy Lindo. From this strong foundation, he began building a line of great performances in several independent hits, including his critically acclaimed role in the film *In Search of a Dream*, the number one grossing independent Latino film. Appearing as a guest star on many hit series over the years, Elvis also was seen recurring in the Spike Lee series **"Miracle Boys."** Elvis shot a series regular in the HBO pilot **"Da Brick"**, directed by Spike Lee and executive produced and written by John Ridley. He has a memorable role in Spike Lee's feature films *The Sweet Blood of Jesus* and *Old Boy*. Recently seen in the critically-acclaimed award-winning ABC anthology series **"American Crime"** from John Ridley, Elvis was lauded for his performances playing a different character in each season. First in Season 1 taking on the part of Carter Nix, a lost soul suffering from mental illness and drug addiction; in Season 2 he portrayed Chris Dixon, a passionate high school principal. Elvis recently shot a series regular role in the Kathryn Bigelow/Carolyn Strauss produced HBO pilot **"Mogadishu, MN"** and can be seen on Netflix starting March 2018 playing a supporting part in the Forest Whitaker and Pharrell produced *Roxanne Roxanne* from director Michael Larnell which premiered at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival. Elvis can be seen playing the character of 'Papo' in the Spike Lee directed series **"She's Gotta Have It"** (based on the film of the same name) for Netflix as well as the recurring character of 'Chip Lauderdale' in the TNT series **"Claws"** that stars Niecy Nash. Elvis continues to work on stage, where his performances have earned him rave reviews.

**ABOUT ELISE THORON**

As associate artistic director at American Place Theatre, Elise co-founded **Literature to Life**, a highly successful theater literacy program now in its third decade nationwide. In addition to **Oscar Wao**, she adapted and directed Baldwin's **If Beale Street Could Talk**, Hurston's **Folktales**, Cisneros' **The House on Mango Street**, Lois Lowry's **The Giver**, and developed **County of Kings** with Tony award winning spoken-word poet, Lemon Andersen, which went on to the Public Theater and venues around the world. Elise has created many cross-cultural exchanges with Russian and American theater artists; she adapted and directed **The Great Gatsby** in Russian at a The Pushkin Theater in Moscow, where it played for over nine years. Her plays and translations have been produced in the United States, Europe, Japan, Cuba. Productions include **Green Violin**, music by Frank London, (*Nine Contemporary Jewish Plays*); **Prozak and the Platypus**, music by Jill Sobule (*CD/graphic novella*); **Charlotte: Life? Or Theater?** music by Gary Fagin based on paintings by Charlotte Salomon; **Recycling: washi tales**, an ongoing collaboration with distinguished Japanese paper artist Kyoko Ibe. Her most recent work **Hatuey Memory of Fire**, a Cuban nightclub opera in Yiddish, with composer Frank London, was produced by Opera de la Calle in Havana, and will have its North American premiere at Peak Performances in September 2018.

**PLEASE NOTE:** We ask that you use Book-It's full name "**Book-It Repertory Theatre**" or simply "**Book-It**", in all text and listings. Thank You.

**ABOUT THE 2017-2018 SEASON**

In the fall of 2017, Book-It presents **Dr. Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings**. During the holiday season, a musical adaptation of **Howl's Moving Castle** by **Diana Wynne Jones** features music by **Justin Huertas** and stars **Sara Porkalob**. Book-It kicks off 2018 by returning to Pioneer Square for a theatrical culinary collaboration with Café Nordo with one of the most popular detective novels **The Maltese Falcon**, by **Dashiell Hammett**. In the spring, Book-It presents Young Audiences New York's production of **The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao**, by **Junot Díaz** in a limited run. Book-It's final selection is **Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray**.

**ABOUT BOOK-IT REPERTORY THEATRE**

Book-It Repertory Theatre, a leader in the narrative theatre movement, was founded in 1990. Book-It is a non-profit organization with a dedication to great literature and quality theatre experiences employing simple, sensitive, and imaginative production techniques, and to inspiring its audiences to read. The company is funded, in part, by generous contributions from corporations and foundations, and hundreds of individuals who share its passion for literature.

**FOR CALENDAR EDITORS**

**WHAT:** Book-It hosts a Literature to Life/Young Audiences New York adaptation of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel that chronicles the life of Oscar de León, an overweight Dominican boy growing up in Paterson, New Jersey. Oscar is obsessed with science fiction and fantasy novels, falling in love, and the curse that has plagued his family for generations. Performed by artist Elvis Nolasco ("American Crime", "She's Gotta Have It"), this production shows the importance of facing fear with love.

**WHEN:** Previews: Thursday, April 19 and Friday, April 20  
Opening Night: Saturday, April 21  
Closing: Sunday, May 6

**TIMES:** Wednesday-Saturday—7:30pm (Matinées on April 25 and May 5)  
Sundays – 2:00pm

**WHERE:** The Center Theatre at the Armory (305 Harrison Street, Seattle, WA 98109).

**TICKETS:** Tickets start at \$26 with group rates available. \$15 tickets will be available to students during the entire run with valid school ID. Purchase at [book-it.org](http://book-it.org) or by calling the box office at 206.216.0833. The box office is open Tues through Fri, 12:00pm – 5:00pm (Tues – Sat during production run), located in the outer lobby of The Center Theatre at the Armory.

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