

STEPPEWOLF HALF HOUR

Season 2, Ep: 4 – Sandra Marquez: “On a Team”

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Featuring: Sandra Marquez and Cliff Chamberlain. With Audrey Francis, James Vincent Meredith, Caroline Neff and Mary Hungerford.

Sandra Marquez:

And it was the first time in my life that I met people who looked like me who did theater.

Audrey Francis:

From Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago, Illinois.

Sandra Marquez:

I thought this is it. This is—these are the people—I want to be on a team. I like to be on a team.

Audrey Francis:

This is *Half Hour*.

James Vincent Meredith:

Welcome back, my friends.

Audrey Francis:

Hello, hello.

James Vincent Meredith:

We are back with another episode of *Half Hour*'s second season. This week, we've got me James Vincent Meredith—

Audrey Francis:

And me Audrey Francis—

Caroline Neff:

Caroline Neff—

Cliff Chamberlain:

And me Cliff Chamberlain.

James Vincent Meredith:

Cliff, Cliff, Cliff.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Doctor, Doctor, Doctor.

James Vincent Meredith:

This week, we have got a conversation, conversation, conversation with you and Sandra Marquez—one of my favorite people, like on Earth.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Yep.

James Vincent Meredith:

Oh, my gosh. That you recorded a while back. And I am truly beyond jealous that you got to have a chance to sit down with her, and rap with her talk to her. She is the best. Tell me about how it was catching up with her.

Cliff Chamberlain:

I have this sort of great connection with Sandra because we're both from Central California. And I've... I just really—because I just adore Sandra so much... to know that there's that connection, made sense. It was like, "Oh, I see you. And I recognize you. And we are from the same place on Earth, but from vastly different experiences there." And so, I was really curious just to hear about—I was like, "I know my journey from there, I'm really interested to hear yours." And it's fascinating and as wonderful as she is.

Audrey Francis:

And I was so lucky to be able to co-direct the audio version of *I'm Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* with her. And that's exactly how Sandra always makes—I think—everybody feel. Like, Sandra Marquez makes you feel instantly seen, heard, respected, and valued. And as someone (speaking for myself) who has a little bit of like an ego, I would say—

Caroline Neff:

What?

James Vincent Meredith:

Audrey?

Audrey Francis:

I never... [Laughter] I never thought that I could, you know, co-direct something with anybody. And Sandra Marquez is the most inspiring, equitable, egalitarian artist that I could ever imagine collaborating with on a directorial level. And I just think that speaks such volumes of how she just constantly leads with her heart—with such humility. And she doesn't have to because she's so incredibly creative and passionate and visionary.

Caroline Neff:

She's one of those very special people that everyone sort of feels a kinship with her no matter how little the connection is. We were asked into the company the same year, and ever since I'm like, "Oh, this is my sister." I this is my Steppenwolf sister and, you know, and only just because she's generous that she allows me to feel that way. [Laughter]

James Vincent Meredith:

And also, just generally, just like, smart, sharp. Like I'm instantly smarter for having conversations with her like, whether they're five minutes or 15 minutes she's—

Audrey Francis:

Yeah.

James Vincent Meredith:

Okay, should we go ahead and listen to this?

Cliff Chamberlain:

Absolutely.

Audrey Francis:

Noise-cancelling headphones on.

James Vincent Meredith:

Here we go. [*Laughter*] This is Cliff Chamberlain and Sandra Marquez.

Stage Manager:

Company, this is your half hour call. This is half hour until the top of the show. Half hour. If you have not signed in, please do so at this time. Half hour, half hour.

Cliff Chamberlain:

I feel like you are someone who I feel really connected to and have over the last few years, but I don't know you very well. Right?

Sandra Marquez:

I know!

Cliff Chamberlain:

You know those people where you are like, "I just, I just love Sandra Marquez." [*Laughter*]

Sandra Marquez:

Aw. That's so sweet. But I feel the same way about you! And when I found out you were from the Central Valley of California, where I am from, and where I am speaking to you from, I felt this connection with you because there's something about... I don't know! The people have an idea of what California is. But the Central Valley is a different thing than what people normally think. And I just think it's pretty cool that two people from the Central Valley are members of Steppenwolf Theatre ensemble. I don't know, I just think that's really awesome.

Cliff Chamberlain:

I think so too. And I know my journey. But what was yours from the Central Valley? California roots are really strong.

Sandra Marquez:

Yeah.

Cliff Chamberlain:

If you are from California, especially the Central Valley, this amazingly fertile place—

Sandra Marquez:

Yeah.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Roots are strong. What was it like for you? How did those roots shape you as a person and as an artist?

Sandra Marquez:

Wow. The question even makes me a little emotional. So, I might get a little. Ah. I am of Mexican background. I am Mexican American on both sides. My parents were both born here. And culturally, the roots here are strong. And I've heard my dad say more than once, "This is, you know, here out in the, in the west of America, especially in the southwest of America, the country came to us." And so, I feel this real connection to the land and not just the Central Valley. But when I'm—when I'm driving from the Central Valley to the coast. And I'm going through what Steinbeck called, you know, the Tawny Hills... So that question is loaded with so many things about culture. Not just culture as a woman of Mexican descent, but also as a Californian. And... you know, when I was a kid, I had this very—I lived in this really mixed neighborhood. And it was my family. And then next door to the left was Mrs. Fleming. Her name was Cleo and her husband Sam, and they were from the south. I don't know exactly where they were from. I don't remember; they were elderly. We would mow their lawn and cleaned it up every weekend for them, to help them. And the next door to them was Marie Schwartz. And I think she might have been the only Jewish person on our block. But she always wore a piece of tape, right where her brow furrowed to get the—to get the wrinkles out.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Wow.

Sandra Marquez:

Yeah! And she had a grandson named Gregory. And Gregory was about three at the time. But, Gregory was always burying his glasses. He wore eyeglasses and he would bury them in the yard because he hated them. And so, you'd hear him screaming "Gregory, where are those glasses?" And then you know, people—we would go help and try to dig up the yard to find where the glasses were. And next door to them were the Hanson's and it was a big family. And Michelle Hanson—I used to play with her. Across the street was a Cuban family that pretty much kept to themselves. Then directly across the street from us was a woman named... Oh, now I'm forgetting. I want to say it was Edith. And she had a daughter Elizabeth who was a physically challenged. And then next door to them was a Dutch family. And the wife had passed away, but there was the dad and his son. And his son was dating a Chicana. And I remember because they would—that was back in the 70s, and so she would walk precincts with—he would walk with her to register voters, and she came over to register us and we were like, "Oh, no, we're already registered" because my aunt was part of the Chicano movement and I would walk precincts with her to help register voters. And then next door to them were the DePinto's. And they were an Italian family from New York. And it was Tilly DePinto. And she would babysit me sometimes, and she had a son named Sonny. And whenever Tilly was away, Sonny would have these big parties, and my mom and I would get binoculars and look through to see what was happening at the party. *[Laughter]* She had a daughter named Teresa, and another one as well. But she had a very thick Italian accent. So sometimes when she would babysit us. My brother and I would just giggle because of the accent. And then next door to them was an average American family. Don't remember them too well. And then next door to them was Greg Tabor, who was my brother's age. And his dad had married a woman from Germany. And so there she was with her—she's so interesting. And she always walked barefoot. I remember that. I remember thinking, "That lady's going to have problems. She always walks barefoot; she's going to catch

a cold," because my mother would never let us walk barefoot. And then next door to us on back on my side of the street, where the Renaga's: a family from Mexico. And then next door to them were two—I think it was HUD housing, it may have been HUD housing. I don't even know if it was called that then. But it was a couple of empty lots that houses were built. And there was a family that that moved in right next to the Renaga's. And they had a lot of kids; it was an Irish family. But the nicest boy was my age. Just a sweet, sweet kid. His name is David. Blonde, blonde, blue eyed, just a gentle soul. And years later, my parents heard on the news that he had been in prison for murdering someone. And I remember thinking, "How is that possible? He was the kindest, gentlest soul in that big family." And I just remember my parents were really emotional about that. And then next door to them was a Portuguese family that had moved in. So that was my growing up. So, to me, that was the epitome of California. And it was the 70s and we played baseball in the streets and Mrs. Renaga was always yelling at her sons to be easier on me to let me hit the ball because they were much older than I was. And so, to my mind, that's what I associate with my childhood—and obviously California, because that's where I was. And it was so mixed. So then—

Cliff Chamberlain:

Yeah.

Sandra Marquez:

So, I felt like I knew this whole... I knew all these worlds, a little bit of these worlds. And did I know them super well? No, maybe not. But this is where these worlds kind of came together. And it was interesting. And it was in my fantasy life, I become a writer and I and I write about that. You know, I've never had a desire to write plays. But I have had a desire to write stories or short stories.

Cliff Chamberlain:

When you were talking about that trip through Steinbeck country, I got chills because I'm like... I know—at least I know my version of those roads.

Sandra Marquez:

For sure.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Because I drove them so many times. And please write that story. Because the fact that that place existed, where you grew up, is amazing. And the fact that you remembered all that is unbelievable, your memory. [*Laughter*] So please write that. Okay so, tell us how you got from that amazing experience in California, with all so many different people, to Chicago?

Sandra Marquez:

Yeah, so I went to Fresno State. And while I was there, I decided to do a semester of school in London. And I knew I wanted to be an actor. And, you know, honestly, Cliff, there were things that I wanted to do that were sort of... I was encouraged not to do them. And I think it's because of what I looked like. And there weren't a lot of people who looked like me out in the professional world. So, there was this sort of thing about... I imagine the people and the professors who said those things, were probably—I'm going to give the benefit of the doubt here and assume that it's because they were thinking, "This poor kid doesn't know that people like her don't do this." But I also had really amazing professors at Fresno State who were super encouraging. At some point, I decided that I should go to graduate school. And I don't really know how I had this on my mind, but I knew that women after a certain age probably don't work

very much anymore, in the field, so I should be able to teach. And I like teaching. So, I went to graduate school at UofI Downstate Illinois and Champaign and learned a lot there.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Was it scary to go to another part of the country had had you traveled much?

Sandra Marquez:

I had not.

Cliff Chamberlain:

How did how did you pick Illinois for grad school?

Sandra Marquez:

So, I had done this semester in London, and that was the first time I'd ever left the state of California. And that was so amazing. And then I backpacked through Europe afterwards with a friend of mine, Nancy Holiday that I'm still in touch with. And I remember getting back and thinking, if you can do that, go to all these different countries, not speak the language, be practically broke, barely eat, but have such an amazing experience.... You can do anything. So, when I got back, I still needed to finish up a few credits at Fresno State, but I thought, "You know, what? I want to go to school. Here are the things that I know I need: I know I need a program that has a strong movement program. I know—" I knew the things that I needed as an actor to get stronger. Or at least I thought I knew those things. I knew some of them. And then I learned when I was in school, that there were more things that I needed. But I decided that I should go to school not in California. Since I knew California, I should go someplace else and experience it. I had no idea that California is like a thing in and of itself. I didn't know.

Cliff Chamberlain:

[*Laughter*] Yeah.

Sandra Marquez:

So, I didn't know what I was getting myself into. And on the drive back, My dad drove with me. You know, it was the 80s, but oh my goodness. There were—after pretty much Denver, any restaurant I walked into or whatever—every head would turn. They just, it was just... I was so other.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Hmm.

Sandra Marquez:

And so, in my first month of graduate school, I think I had five dreams in Spanish. Now Spanish was my first language. I didn't speak English, according to my parents, until I was four. But it was not my primary language. And I'm not—I don't consider myself fluent. Because we switched to English once I started going to school. And my parents didn't want us to suffer the same prejudices they had because of their accents. So—and then later, you know, I think they were kind of remorseful about that and wished that we were completely fluent in both languages. But there I am in downstate Illinois. The only other people who looked like me were the people who owned the Mexican restaurant in town. And it was very—in many ways, it was very lonely. I've always liked people, so I can make friends with pretty much any anybody, you know, I just like humans. I like people. But I didn't know what an effect that would have on me, the culture shock of that. It's one thing to be in Europe and not see a lot of people who look like you because it's a different country?

Cliff Chamberlain:

Right.

Sandra Marquez:

But to be in America, in my own country, and have people look at me as other, or stare at me in a restaurant, especially on the road trips to and from Champaign. It was really shocking to the system. So, I had five dreams that were in Spanish, I remember, the first month and I think it was just my subconscious was like... I was just lonely for that. And lonely—I hadn't realized that the rest of the country was so homogenous. I didn't know what that meant.

Stage Manager:

Company this is your fifteen-minute call. Fifteen minutes til the top of the show. Fifteen, fifteen.

Cliff Chamberlain:

How you've described sort of feeling othered or having, you know, experiences of maybe professors maybe thinking, "Oh, she doesn't know yet that there won't be as many roles for her in the profession as she thinks." How did your experience in your early days as an actress shape the way you think about actresses just starting now and your role in their careers as a mentor as a leader as someone who carves out space for others?

Sandra Marquez:

I think it has completely shaped that. I didn't mean to move to Chicago. I meant to stop for a little while. I had a lot of friends here because I had gone to grad school. I meant to stay for six months, maybe a year, and then come back to California. The winters alone were enough for me to get the heck out of here. [Laughter] When I moved to Chicago, my first show in the city of Chicago was with a company called Teatro Vista. And it was the first time in my life that I met people who looked like me who did theater. And I often tell the story, and you may have heard it too, but I couldn't sleep the first week of rehearsal because I was so giddy with amazement, joy, ebullience, about meeting these people. And so, when Eddie Torres invited me to join the company, I said, "Yes, I will join this company" and then the next year, he invited me to be the artistic director. And so—I'm sorry associate artistic director alongside him, which I did for like 10 years. But what I what I realized at the time, was that I had a choice. I could continue to go it alone as I had been doing for so long—and I had wanted to do a lot more classical work I thought that was in grad school I fell in love with it, I thought that's what I would be doing more of. But when I met the people at Teatro Vista and started meeting all these amazing Latinx playwrights. I thought, "This is it. This is—these are the people." I want to be on a team. I like to be on a team, I enjoy being on a team. And this was a team I wanted to be a part of. And so those actors—amazing actors like John Carlos Ceda and Marisela Ochoa (may she rest in peace), and Anthony Diaz-Perez, and just really amazing artists who were so generous and so full of life, and many of whom—Gustavo Mellado—people like that, many of whom were of Mexican American descent, but others who were not: Puerto Rican, and Argentinian. And it was a mixed company. It wasn't—there were African Americans and White folks. And it was a little bit of everything. And it's changed a lot throughout the years. But those—my early time in that company felt like a real home. And so, as I've been teaching all these years, and working, it... My mom always says that our job in life is to leave the world a little bit better than how we found it. And so, I see my role as somebody who can, that's maybe, that's a way I can do that. You know, because sometimes—what I haven't told you is the two-year detour that I took, because I thought I wanted to join the convent.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Whoa!

Sandra Marquez:

Yeah, so I took some time off from college. And so, those women were the strongest feminists I've met to date. And they were real radicals within the church. And I just fell in love with their care-ism, or their ethic, and their real belief in social justice and the work they were doing. And so those kind of seem to fuse. And so, going back to being an actor seems sort of paltry; it seemed sort of small. And yet, I just really felt like this is what I wanted to do. And so, I started to realize that I had an opportunity within myself to create my own mission, my own care-ism. And if I could, even in small ways, help those coming behind me. Because for me, it was very lonely. And I didn't realize how lonely until I met the people at Teatro Vista. I didn't realize what I had been longing for what I had been missing. And then I found it. And I was like, "Oh, my goodness." And so, I try to be supportive of those coming after me. And, you know, and it's hard sometimes. I want to see everything that they're doing, I want to see shows, I want to go see those things. And it's sometimes hard to get to everything or to do everything. But I see so much, so much young talent, and I'm excited that they know that there's a place for them out there or they are working to create those spaces, because what a shame it is when we don't uplift other people's talent. It is our loss.

Cliff Chamberlain:

You talked about being—loving being part of a team. And you joined the Steppenwolf team late into your time in Chicago.

Sandra Marquez:

Yeah.

Cliff Chamberlain:

What was that experience like, to take all the knowledge that you had, and join up with a theatre company that had already been around for many years?

Sandra Marquez:

So, I did my first show with Steppenwolf. I think it was 1999, maybe. It was *A Streetcar Named Desire*. And so I had—and during my years in Chicago, you know how it is, if we get invited to do an audition, or we get invited to, you know, say, "Hey, are you interested in auditioning for this?" And there are times where you say, "I can't; I'm not available." And so, there were times sometimes when Steppenwolf would invite me to audition for something, but I was very busy with Teatro Vista, or I was busy with doing whatever. And since Teatro Vista was my heart and soul for so many years and continues to be a big part of my heart, I wasn't always able to take advantage of the audition opportunities. That's just the nature of being an actor. So then, I was—but I have done some shows at Steppenwolf. And you know, it's a storied company, and it's got a lot of history and it's got a lot of heft. And it can be daunting. It can be daunting to walk into the rehearsal room of Steppenwolf, right?

Cliff Chamberlain:

Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Sandra Marquez:

And so, um... And it can also be pretty fun. Pretty darn fun. [Laughter] And the Chicago actors will understand this, we—The great thing about Chicago is that you can be doing theater in a small place

where, you know, you need some props, and you're lucky if you get them by opening night. And then you come to a place, a bigger place like Steppenwolf, and you're standing in rehearsal room and you think, "I think I'd like a pillow for this." And 30 minutes later, somebody brings you four choices of a pillow. "Which one do you want?" You know, so that's pretty amazing. Yeah. But I think, for me, I wanted to know why. What's the why? There hadn't been anyone—it was it came as such a shock to me, honestly, because there hadn't been anybody who looked like me in the company. So, I didn't even know that was a thing. That it was a thing that somebody like me could be invited into the company. So, it was daunting in that way. And, and I think that I'm still... I feel much more at home now. But I do feel like I continually look for ways to help expand how we're thinking and—along with people like yourself and other company members and, and the amazing staff and Anna and—there's a lot of thinking about that: how do we broaden? And I was proud to be to be part of that initiative. To be brought in during that time. And I'm proud of the work that gets done. So, it was daunting, exciting. I have very rarely in my life forgotten to eat. I just don't—I'm not a person... Like when people say, "I forgot to eat," I just want to slap them. I'm like that... "Oh, shut up already. What do you mean, you forgot to eat, who forgets to eat?" But the day that Anna invited me in, I thought I was getting fired. I was doing *Mary Page Marlowe*. And I got an email that morning from Anna saying I need to speak to you before 4:30 today and I was like, "Oh boy." So, I practiced all day how to graciously get fired. And I thought, "You know what? Okay, everyone gets fired at some point in their life. Okay." And I had been pretty vocal about some things about my character that didn't... that I wanted to talk through. That didn't sit well with me. So, I thought that what this was about, and I was like, "Okay, well, at least I go to bed at night, knowing that I said what I needed to say." And then when she said, "We'd like to know if you'd like to join the ensemble," I was dumbfounded! I couldn't, I literally could not speak. That was not what I was expecting.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Wow.

Sandra Marquez:

And then my—and then when I finally could speak, my first question was "Why? Why me?" Because I wanted to know... because no one wants to feel like they're a token. And so, I needed to understand. I needed to understand what this meant. And I feel like space has been made for me to speak whatever I need to speak. So.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Well, I'm so glad because I love to listen. It's very... it's an incredibly fortunate position to be in to be around people like you. Okay, so, before I just keep talking about how cool I think you are, I want to ask you: you played Clytemnestra for years. Right?

Sandra Marquez:

Yeah, I did it four years. For four years.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Four years, one character, multiple plays. How did playing Clytemnestra over the course of four years, influence you as an actress and as a human being?

Sandra Marquez:

Gosh, oh my gosh, okay. That was always my dream to play that role.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Really?

Sandra Marquez:

Yeah. Yeah. I just love the Greeks. And when I was in grad school, I got to play Hecuba and, you know, I was 20-something, whatever. I didn't know what the heck I was doing. But I had so much fun not knowing what I was doing. And so, years later at the Goodman, I got to play—in Luis Alfaro's adaptation of *Electra*—Sophocles' *Electra*— he wrote a play called *Electricidad*. And so, I got to play the Clytemnestra role in that. Her name is Clemencia in that. And then I got invited to audition for Clytemnestra at the Court Theatre, and I remember thinking, "I want to do this so badly. Oh gosh, oh gosh, oh gosh." And I didn't get to, you know, I don't often—I don't get called in for classical stuff. It happens more now. So, working with Charlie on that was just so... it was amazing. And we did *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and then we did *Agamemnon* which is really hard. And then we did *Electra* and then we went back and *Iphigenia at Aulis* at the Getty out in Malibu. And to do it again—that time I was like, "Okay, I think I finally understand what I'm supposed to be doing here." When you get to replay a role, you learn so much and you realize how the first one was so lacking. [Laughter] But, you know, that's okay. That's okay. But I have to say I just love learning about the Greeks. I just love... I just love all that. I love the challenge of the language, the challenge of the time. And also, it's a heavy toll because I remember thinking after doing all this, I was like, "Okay, I need a break from the Greeks." Because those are the same things we're dealing with as human beings now. Here we are 2500 years later. And these are the things that we were dealing with. And it's amazing. And sad at the same time. You know, it really is. And I wish I could read the stuff from other cultures, or know the stuff from other cultures as well. It makes me hungry for that. You know, like, what did the Mayans do? You know, what were they doing before the Spanish burnt all their stuff? What were the—in Africa, what was going on? And in Asia, what was going on? And I know there's a lot out there that I can learn about. It makes me hungry to learn about those things and how other cultures were doing. Because storytellers are part of human existence. So again, it just makes me hungry for all the different kinds of stories from all the different cultures.

Stage Manager:

Company, this is your five-minute call. Five minutes to the top of the show. Five minutes to the top of the show. This is five.

Cliff Chamberlain:

So one, you know, one unit of time that I love to sort of relax in and sit in is the half hour before a show. What is your half hour routine?

Sandra Marquez:

[Laughter] My half hour routine is about calming the nerves. And I like to get to the theater early to settle in, to get my makeup on, to have just sort of a peaceful dressing room to calm down. And then I sort of like—I have my little markers like at 20 minutes before curtain, I want to know that I have such and such done. And at 10 minutes before curtain, I know that I need to have such and such done. I'm also a person who looks at their lines every day. I once heard that... who was it? Laurence Olivier did that. And I just feel better if I do it.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Yeah.

Sandra Marquez:

I just can relax more. So, I like to have that done by top of half hour, no later than 20 minutes, top of half hour. Sometimes I'll do it in the morning before I even go to the theater. I'll start the day that way. But normally, I like to do it a little bit closer to curtain time. And I may look over my notes that I've taken in rehearsal sometimes. And then I just do some deep breathing. And then I'm always so worried that I'm gonna have to pee while I'm on stage, so I go to the bathroom like four times in that half hour. I'm just like, "I got to make sure I just got to make sure."

Cliff Chamberlain:

Same. I think that's really the biggest secret about actors that... Most actors are just peeing nonstop before a show. That's like, that's what's happening, chances are.

Sandra Marquez:

Oh my gosh, it's true.

Cliff Chamberlain:

We now have the *Half Hour* lightning round segment.

Sandra Marquez:

Oh no.

Cliff Chamberlain:

So, I'm going to ask you some lightning round questions.

Sandra Marquez:

Okay.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Just whatever pops into your brain.

Sandra Marquez:

Oh, boy. Okay.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Okay, ready?

Sandra Marquez:

Yes.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Okay. What was your welcome to Steppenwolf moment?

Sandra Marquez:

The first ensemble meeting. It was interesting.

Cliff Chamberlain:

What job didn't you get that broke your heart?

Sandra Marquez:

Oh, I don't want to say.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Okay. Okay. What animal do you most identify with?

Sandra Marquez:

A cat crossed with a dog. I think I'm loyal like a dog. But I have some cat qualities in that, I also like to be sort of, like, on my own and independent.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Yeah. What's your most prized piece of play memorabilia?

Sandra Marquez:

Oh, you know what, I don't know if I have one. But, I often save the cards that people write for each show. And then I keep them with all together for each show. And what I want to do is I want to get a glass vase and then put all the cards in there and just—so like a little piece of art. And then I'll have that when I'm old.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Can I—I'm stealing that.

Sandra Marquez:

Okay.

Cliff Chamberlain:

That's awesome.

Sandra Marquez:

You can steal that. I let you.

Cliff Chamberlain:

What artist is giving you the most inspiration right now?

Sandra Marquez:

Oh my gosh, that... Wow. That is? Well, you know what, lately I would say... I would say Luis Alfaro never fails to inspire me with what he does and what he's doing. And I had the honor and pleasure of recording he just published— and this is lightning round. He—That's it!

Cliff Chamberlain:

Okay. What do you daydream about?

Sandra Marquez:

Getting a dog and a tiny house on the coast.

Cliff Chamberlain:

If you had a superpower, what would it be?

Sandra Marquez:

I would fly. And I would be flying all the time. *[Laughter]* I would fly over those Tawny hills. I would fly. I would just fly all the time. Yeah. And then I land in really tall trees. And then I would go to like places like Vancouver, whatever if I was in the mood for a little rain. Fly over cool cities. Yeah. I would fly.

Cliff Chamberlain:

What is one thing you do every day?

Sandra Marquez:

Meditate. I meditate every day.

Cliff Chamberlain:

What's your favorite place to unwind in Chicago?

Sandra Marquez:

My condo, my home. I have a great living room with a great view and it looks like a tree house and I just like to chill there. Also, the lake. I love the lake. I love walking to the lake.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Mm. And finally, if you were a character in a play, what would your character's description be?

Sandra Marquez:

Kind of wacky. Kind of absent minded. At times super organized. Loyal. A little bit neurotic. And a big laugh. *[Laughter]*

Stage Manager:

Company. This is your places call. Places, please, for the top of the show. Places please, for the top of the show. Have a good one, everyone. Places please, places.

James Vincent Meredith:

Ooooh! I've got to do a softer air horn. Pew, pew, pew. *[Laughter]* I love her so much.

Cliff Chamberlain:

She's the best. She is the best.

James Vincent Meredith:

Yes.

Caroline Neff:

She is equal parts, like, one of the wisest people I've ever met. And then one of like... She's, also so incredibly honest through this. Like, my half hour routine is not much different, particularly depending on how long the play is. And I'm glad that somebody is talking about her bodily functions and how we have to deal with those before we go onto a stage in front of people. That math is really hard to do.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Yes.

Caroline Neff:

I just love her honesty.

James Vincent Meredith:

Also one of these cool things that I think about with her. One of the things that she said to me and to other people I'm sure is she's good at like two things. I can't remember what one of them was. But the other thing is, is she's like a real connector of people. You know what I mean? Like she has like such a wide swath of people in the world that she's gotten to know because she's such a warm hearted, honest, open person that she finds ways to connect people who normally wouldn't be connected. And she's a connector.

Audrey Francis:

And I'm so glad she didn't become a nun. Lucky for us.

Caroline Neff:

But I do want her to write that book. Sandra, if you're still listening, give us that book.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Yeah.

James Vincent Meredith:

She's someone we could talk about, like, for like a whole other podcast. Anyway.

Cliff Chamberlain:

For Three Hour. When we do Three Hour.

James Vincent Meredith:

Yes, we'll bring her back—actually we won't have to bring her back. We can just talk for three hours about her because we love her. So, she's awesome.

Audrey Francis:

Yeah, we'll do it when she releases her book.

James Vincent Meredith:

Yes, there you go. That's incredible. Guys, that is our time for this week. Thank you for listening to this episode of *Half Hour* brought to you by Steppenwolf Theatre Company.

Cliff Chamberlain:

And thanks again to our guest this week, Sandra Marquez.

Caroline Neff:

If you want to check out Sandra's work, and I highly recommend that you do, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Isaac Gómez, and co-directed by Sandra Marquez and Audrey Francis—

Audrey Francis:

What?

Caroline Neff:

This radio play is available on Steppenwolf Now: our streaming platform featuring six digital pieces by some of the most exciting voices in the American Theatre.

Audrey Francis:

Steppenwolf Now memberships are currently available and for a limited time, we're extending an exclusive deal just for *Half Hour* listeners. Okay, \$25 off when you use the code HALF HOUR at steppenwolf.org/now.

James Vincent Meredith:

Half Hour is produced by Patrick Zakem, mixed and edited by Matthew Chapman.

Cliff Chamberlain:

The theme music for *Half Hour* is by Michael Bodeen and Rob Milburn.

Caroline Neff:

The voice of this episode's stage manager was Mary Hungerford.

Audrey Francis:

Special thanks to Erin Cook, Joel Moorman, Kara Henry, Christopher Huizar, Kerstin Adams, Madeline Long, Corinne Florentino—

James Vincent Meredith:

And all of the folks at Steppenwolf.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Follow us on Twitter @Steppenwolfthtr, or on Facebook and Instagram, where we will be sharing some incredible photos of Sandra's life and career.

Caroline Neff:

And you can always get in touch by emailing halfhour@steppenwolf.org.

Audrey Francis:

In two weeks, we'll be back with a conversation with Tony Award-winning scenic and costume designer, Clint Ramos.

Cliff Chamberlain:

Our first designer on *Half Hour*!

James Vincent Meredith:

Till next time, this is James Vincent Meredith—

Caroline Neff:

Caroline Neff—

Audrey Francis:

Audrey Francis—

Cliff Chamberlain:

And Cliff Chamberlain. A lifetime to engage; half hour, to places