

OPINION

Laredo Morning Times

A HEARST NEWSPAPER

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Last chance to see LTGI's 'The Last Five Years'

If you haven't checked it out, today is the last opportunity to see The Laredo Theater Guild International's (LTGI) production of Jason Robert Brown's Award-winning musical, "The Last Five Years." You can purchase tickets on their website.

The production is at the Laredo College Shoebox Theater at 3 p.m. It is directed by Chayo Moreno and produced by Susie Laurel. It features the local talent of Lisa Martinez, who plays Catherine Hiatt, and Roland Vela, who plays Jamie Wellerstein.

The Laredo Guild's website accredits "The Last Five Years" as being named one of TIME Magazine's 10 Best Shows in 2001. Since the musical was translated into several languages, it has captivated audiences around the world.

"It is an emotionally powerful and deeply intimate musical about two New Yorkers (in their twenties) who fall in and out of love over the course of five years. The show's inventive structure unfolds from two perspectives: Cathy tells her story in reverse, beginning at the end of the relationship, while Jamie's journey moves forward in time. Their paths intersect only once...at their wedding, the midpoint of the show," Time Magazine writes.

Lisa Martinez, who plays Cathy Hiatt, has been a proud member of the LTGI community on and off since 2009, finding joy both onstage and behind the scenes. This marks her third production with the company. She spent several years in Austin performing and teaching locally, including work at the University of Texas and the city's regional theater, ZACH Theater.

Her most recent credits include Mrs. Dashwood/Anne Steel in "Sense and Sensibility"; Patty DiMarco in "School of Rock"; Constance Blackwood in "Ride the Cyclone" at Laredo College; Mrs. Wormwood

in "Matilda the Musical"; and Elizabeth Lavenza in "Frankenstein." She is deeply grateful to her family and friends for their constant love and support as she continues to pursue her creative passions.

Rolando Vela plays Jamie Wellerstein in this production. He was credited as the choreographer in the LTGI's production of "The Little Mermaid." He is a proud Laredo native, based in Austin. He graduated with a bachelor of arts in multidisciplinary studies (theater, dance and communication) from Texas A&M International University and is very excited to return to his community and work with LTGI once again. Though he's worn many hats on stage, this production will mark his first time choreographing a full stage musical. His previous work includes: "After Juliet" (Valentine/choreographer); "Beauty and the Beast" (ensemble), "High School Musical" (Jack Scott); "Mary Poppins" (Valentine/ensemble), "Speech & Debate" (director); and "Austin Latinx New Play Festival: Diving Board" (director). He thanks LTGI for this opportunity as well as his family and partner for their continued support.

Laredo Theater Guild International is listed with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit group. It is a community-based theater organization presenting a season of quality theatrical productions at Texas A&M International University and Laredo College, within their fine performance venues at the Center for the Fine and Performing Arts and at the Guadalupe and Lilia Martinez Foundation Center, respectively.

Their productions include classical and contemporary dramas, comedies, musicals, and single performer shows, selected from among known Broadway, Off-Broadway and Regional Theater works. The primary goal of this

endeavor is to provide relevant theatrical entertainment of the highest caliber, while growing and developing the local performer, production, audience, and patron communities.

Laredo Theater Guild International partners with local institutions to present productions for the public. These institutions allow our organization to utilize their production venues to provide the best possible shows for our audiences. Their venue locations in Laredo have included: Texas A&M International University Center for the Fine and Performing Arts Theater and TAMIU Sam Johnson Experimental Theater (both are located at 5201 University Blvd.); Laredo College's The Shoebox Theater. Building T-30 on Hudson Street; Laredo College's Guadalupe and Lilia Martinez Fine Arts Center Theater, located at West End Washington Street; and Laredo Center for the Arts, located at 500 San Agustin Ave.

I encourage you to visit their website at www.laredotheaterguild.org. They have some clips from a few of their productions and a five-minute video titled "Behind the Scenes: A Decade of LTGI." I was amazed at some of the productions they have put on and the list of some of the people involved: John Maxstadt; John Kilburn; Linda L. Howland; Allie Howland; Suzanne H. Alford; Christina Greco; Henry Mejia, Chris Morgan; Karol Batey; Mara Lopez; and Ysela Arechiga.

Ysela told me she loves helping out in any way she can. She loves working with the energetic and creative group. I even saw my cousin, Dr. Celina T. Oliveria listed in the production of Fool for Love by Sam Shepard.

Congratulations to the LTGI's officers, board of directors, cast members and volunteers for the amazing work they have

done over the years. They really have put on some amazing productions: "The Good Doctor" by Neil Simon; "Sense and Sensibility" by Kate Hamill; "School of Rock the Musical," based on the Paramount movie by Mike White; "Picasso" by Steve Martin; "Fool for Love" by Sam Shepard; "Zoot Suit" by Luise Valdez; "Hand to God" by Robert Askins; "Matilda the Musical" by Roald Dahl; "Frankenstein," based on the novel by Mary Shelley; Disney's "The Little Mermaid"; "Hedwig and the Angry Inch"; "Into the Woods" by Stephen Sondheim; "The Sound of Music"; "West Side Story," and so much more. The list goes on and on. Great job!

For more information on how you can get involved and support the arts call 956-319-8610 or send an email to laredotheaterguild@gmail.com.

Mark your calendars
SOUTH TEXAS FOOD BANK: JARS OF LOVE WITH LMC

Join us in supporting the South Texas Food Bank by donating jars of peanut butter. You can drop off your jars at LMC through Tuesday, March 24. For more information email info@southtexasfood-bank.org

LAREDO PHILHARMONIC CHORALE: THE 7 WORDS OF CHRIST

Come experience this evocative and spiritual masterpiece brought to life by the voices of the Laredo Philharmonic Choral. The event will be on Sunday, March 29, at 3pm at the TAMIU Fine and Performing Arts Center. Admission cost is \$30 & Students with ID can enter for free. For tickets, call 956-763-9960

LAREDO VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE (VITA)

Just a friendly reminder; April 15 is right around the corner. Free tax help is here! The Laredo VITA

program has IRS Certified Preparers ready to help you. Don't stress about your taxes — let a qualified volunteer handle it for you. Call 956-307-8138 or visit www.vitalaredo.org

CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER: 26TH ANNUAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION & AWARENESS CONFERENCE SAVE THE DATE

The event will be held Thursday, April 2, at the TAMIU Student Center. For more information, call 956-712-1840

AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER (AHEC): BOWLING TOURNAMENT

The AHEC Tournament is scheduled for Saturday, April 4, from noon to 3:30 p.m. at Jett Bowl North. For more information, contact AHEC at 956-712-0037.

IMAGINARIUM OF SOUTH TEXAS: AEP LIGHT UP THE NIGHT

Join us for the AEP Free Family Night on Friday, April 10, from 6-9 p.m. at the Imaginarium located the main campus of Laredo College (West End Washington Street) Building P-149. For more information, please call 956-728-0404.

LAREDO PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP: UNDERSTANDING PARKINSON'S

Everyone is invited to come learn more about Parkinson's. The workshop will be held on Saturday, April 11, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the TAMIU Western Hemispheric Trade Center, Room 111. The event will feature three keynote speakers: Kristen Martulis, DNP, APRN, AGNC-C, Department Of Neurology-UT Health Science Center in San Antonio will present "A New Frontier vs. Deep Brain Stimulation"; Leila Saadatpour, M.D. and assistant professor of neurology UT Health Science Center in San Antonio will present "Non-Motor Symptoms in Parkinson's"; and

Pablo Coss, M.D. and assistant professor of neurology-UT Health Science Center in San Antonio will present "Parkinson's Therapies" and an update on Laredo Clinics. For more information or to register for the event call 956-942-5511.

SMILES FROM HEAVEN: YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND IN ME GALA

Save the date. This event is scheduled for Friday, April 17, at The Barn located at 4653 Casa Blanca Lake Rd. For more information, call 956-441-0218.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE COUNCIL FOR BORDER REGION: ALL WE NEED IS LOVE & A DASH OF STYLE 34TH ANNUAL ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS DAY LUNCHEON & FASHION SHOW

The event will be held on Wednesday, April 22, at the Laredo Country Club; \$100 per seat or \$1,000 a table.

For more information, contact Claudia Arredondo at 956-612-4664 or Juanita Zepeda at 956-235-3599.

IMAGINARIUM OF SOUTH TEXAS: HEB free family fun night

Join us for the HEB Free Family Fun Night on Friday, April 24, from 6-9 p.m. at the Imaginarium located the main campus of Laredo College (West End Washington Street) Building P-149. For more information, please call 956-728-0404.

UNITED WAY OF LAREDO; THAT'S HOW WE ROLL: BOWLING TOURNAMENT

Saturday, April 25th at Jett Bowl North from 12 p.m.-3p.m.

For more information call 956.723.9113 If you have an upcoming community event or information on a non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization you would like to share, email 956cuidandoloneuro@laredo.com. Peggy M. Duncan United Way of Laredo

GUEST OP-ED

Flying is abysmal — and it's getting worse

By Mark Gongloff
BLOOMBERG OPINION

A couple of years ago, a reporter asked Blackpool FC's manager at the time, Mick McCarthy, about his team's terrible form, saying, "One win in 17. It can't go on like this, can it?" The Irishman took a beat, smiled grimly and said, "It can."

U.S. air travelers know the feeling. No matter how punishing they might have thought flying was in recent history, it just seems to keep getting worse. It's certainly not the most important thing going on in the world right now, but it adds to a malaise among American consumers that could have real economic and political repercussions. The latest affront to

flyers comes in the form of agonizingly long lines at security checkpoints. Transportation Security Administration workers have been toiling without pay for more than a month, collateral damage in a congressional battle over funding for their umbrella agency, the Department of Homeland Security. Hundreds of agents have quit, and those that remain are less cheerful than usual. Many are calling in sick so they can work second jobs that actually pay them for their labor. The result is fewer open checkpoints and lines that can stretch toward the taxi stands.

Domestic air travelers usually need to get to the airport two hours ahead of time to make it through security. Now airports are

warning that they'll probably need another hour if they want to make their flights.

Meanwhile, the energy crisis sparked by the war in Iran is boosting jet-fuel prices, which will make the privilege of waiting for hours to be crammed into airborne cattle cars far more expensive. Jet fuel prices have surged 60% since the war began to \$3.99 a gallon, according to the Argus U.S. Jet Fuel Index. That has already started to impact some ticket prices, NBC News reported. The longer the war lasts, the likelier prices are to rise and stay high, the president of the industry group Airlines for America told Bloomberg News.

Though U.S. airlines don't hedge their fuel

costs, they might be tempted to eat a temporary bump to avoid hurting demand. They're putting on brave faces for now, with executives for Delta Air Lines Inc. and American Airlines Group Inc. making bullish forecasts for spring and summer travel demand. But Bloomberg News suggested much of a recent surge in ticket sales consisted of travelers trying to lock in prices before they rose too high.

Shares of Delta and American rose on the news, but both companies warned that higher costs would threaten margins. That's a reminder that any air travelers who are still dreaming of a return to the good old days of leg room, refreshments, free luggage and other such extravagances will have to keep dreaming.

American Airlines travelers can't even expect seatback screens, a luxury the company considered too expensive long before the Iran war, as my Bloomberg Opinion colleague Thomas Black noted in October. It only recently started offering free WiFi service, and only to members of its loyalty program.

So it goes, regardless of airline: Seats get smaller, lines get longer, amenities become rarer and more expensive, customer service gets worse, and more flights are delayed and canceled. At least we can't expect standing seats anytime soon. (Right?)

It's little wonder that consumers' complaints about flying have broken records in four of the past five years, according to Department of Transportation data. They hit nearly 67,000 in 2024 (the latest data available), more than quadruple the number in 2015.

Adding insult to injury, the Trump administration last year scrapped a rule proposed by the Biden administration that would have made airlines pay travelers when flights are delayed or canceled. In fact, along with the Iran war, several recent travel disruptions have been a direct result of federal government actions. Most notable and harrowing were last year's mass layoffs of air traffic controllers, thinning a harried workforce already faced with hundreds of near-collisions each year, according to a New York Times investigation.

Once a rare luxury, air travel is now something most Americans must endure every now and then. As of 2023, about half of all American adults had flown at least once in the prior year, according to the DOT. That's more than 100 million potential voters made poorer and more miserable by travel.

One of the only things uniting both President Donald Trump and Joe Biden is their apparent shared befuddlement over American consumers' sentiment that the economy is bad when the headline numbers suggest otherwise. Trump might want to remember how well this worked out for Biden. Because what those headline numbers don't capture is how often the riches flowing to those at the top of the economy come at the expense of the rest of us. Air travel is just one reminder of this, and also of how things can always get worse.

Mark Gongloff is a Bloomberg Opinion editor and columnist covering climate change. He previously worked for Fortune.com, the Huffington Post and the Wall Street Journal.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Laredo Morning Times does not publish anonymous letters. Letters must include the writer's first and last names as well as a phone number to verify identity. The phone number is not published; it is used solely to verify identity and to clarify content, if necessary.

When responding to another's letter, writers should focus on the topic and not on the original writer themselves. No name-calling or gratuitous abuse is allowed. Letters are edited for style, grammar, length and civility. Also, letters longer than 1,000 words will not be accepted.

Please send letters to editorial@lmtonline.com attached in a word document or in the email itself. If you cannot send an email, mail to Letters to the Editor, 5711 McPherson Rd Suite 203A, Laredo, TX 78041.