

Manuel Prestamo, Ph.D.

Bio

Sent to the United States on January 6, 1961 by his parents at the age of 9, Manuel had the good fortune to at least get brought out to the United States by his aunt. Nevertheless, in the intervening years before his mother, sister, and grandmother were able to get out and come to the United States his father had passed away. His early years here were difficult ones as his aunt's brother was very opposed to encouraging Manuel's interest in the arts and Manuel was forced to go out to a barn to practice and study violin. He progressed quickly and went to the university at the age of 16 on a full scholarship. By the time he was 21 he had earned a Ph.D. from NYU and become a college professor. He earned his living as a symphony orchestra conductor, conducting orchestras such as the BBC, Uruguay Radio and Television Orchestra, the Teatro Colon, and became recognized for his work with youth orchestras and creating the McZoo Days Show with the Ronald McDonald characters. But, his love of acting as a child never left him and he sought out acting opportunities and played roles such as that of the King in *Once Upon a Mattress*, while serving as Dean of Arts and Humanities at Oklahoma City Community College. When immigrant children were being separated from their parents during the Trump years, Manuel felt compelled to tell "his" story in support of those children. With the current exodus and the separation of families in Ukraine, this recurring immigrant theme is as poignant and relevant today as it was in 1961. In addition, Manuel's estrangement from his parents was also a direct result of Russia's influence on Cuba during the 1960's. The show, *From Cuba with Love: The Story of a Peter Pan Kid*, had its premiere in October of 2019 in a sold out showcase in Orlando which got a standing ovation and the show was immediately booked the next morning. Unfortunately due to Covid, the full show was not written and has not had its premiere. With an expansive record of accomplishments, including winning the Mary Beth Treen Award from South Arts, and 2 Fulbright Scholar appointments, Manuel's services and expertise as a performing artist, administrator and educator have been utilized by organizations for some 40 years in the United States, Austria, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Israel, Chile, Columbia, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Uruguay, Argentina, Israel, and the Far East.