

A film for all you BRAVE SOULS

# HEARTSTORM

AN OPEN MIC OPERA



BASCO HOUSE AND LETHAL FINGER FILMS PRESENT

STARRING ARIANNA BASCO, MAGDALENA SANCHEZ VALENCIA, CHRISTOPHER AGUILAR  
SEBASTIAN SOZZI, AURORA BASCO, RENEE "KOOKI" CHATMAN, MADELINE DIMAYUGA, TU NGO

EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY JO KOY, ARIANNA BASCO, JERRY WHITE JR., MATTHEW J. SUHR  
PRODUCED BY ARIANNA BASCO, JERRY WHITE JR. ASSOCIATE PRODUCED BY GEOFFREY MARSCHALL, ASHLEY LANUZA  
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY GEOFFREY MARSCHALL EDITED BY JERRY WHITE JR. ORIGINAL SCORE COMPOSED BY DARRYL J. BASCO

WRITTEN BY ARIANNA BASCO, JERRY WHITE JR.  
DIRECTED BY JERRY WHITE JR.

# INFORMATION

## Film Title

Heartstorm



## Log Line

A young woman goes on a cathartic journey through memory and imagination inspired by the performers at an open mic. A story of self-discovery, acceptance, and the transformative power of art.

## Press Contact

heartstormfilm@gmail.com

## Technical

Run Time: 88 minutes

Exhibition Format: mov, mp4, DCP

Aspect Ratio: 1.89:1

Shooting Format: 4K

Screening Format: 2K (or 1080)

Language: English, some Spanish

Release Year: 2026

Filming Locations: CA: Hollywood, Downey, Bellflower, San Gabriel

[www.heartstormfilm.com](http://www.heartstormfilm.com) @heartstormfilm [heartstormfilm@gmail.com](mailto:heartstormfilm@gmail.com)



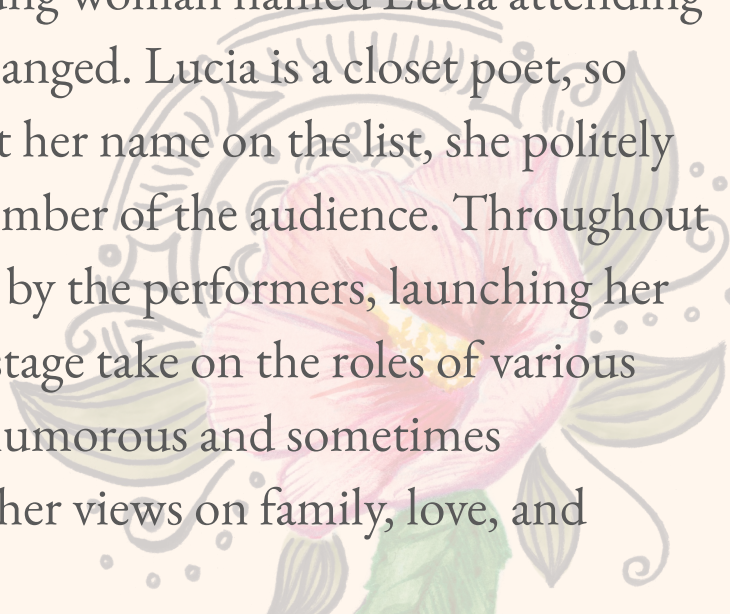
# THE TRAILER



Trailer Link: <https://vimeo.com/1131595552>

# SYNOPSIS

**Heartstorm** is a narrative feature film about a young woman named Lucia attending an open mic for the first time and being forever changed. Lucia is a closet poet, so when she arrives at the mic and is prompted to put her name on the list, she politely declines, opting instead to just take it all in as a member of the audience. Throughout the course of the evening, her memory is triggered by the performers, launching her into dream-like flashbacks in which the artists on stage take on the roles of various people in her life. Through a series of sometimes humorous and sometimes heartbreaking flashbacks, she is forced to examine her views on family, love, and queerness.



# THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Director Jerry White Jr. had a similar experience to Lucia back in 2016, which inspired him to co-write *Heartstorm* from this perspective. A veteran of open mics since 1992, Jerry has long been attracted to niche creative subcultures, outsider artists, and passionate amateurs. What set this particular open mic apart from the many he'd attended over the years was the vibe, structure, and diverse community devoted to sharing the space. While there are plenty of spaces scattered throughout the country that serve these niche wild-hearted folks of common spirit, only LA's RecessMic has Arianna Lady Basco at the helm.

Lady Basco has been curating dynamic intentional spaces since 2006. She's the founder of the arts organization Palms Up Academy and hosts its weekly open mic in Historic Filipinotown, Los Angeles. Like Jerry and the award-winning documentary he produced, *20 Years of Madness* (2016), which premiered open night at Slamdance, Arianna has continually engaged in filmmaking endeavors such as *The Fabulous Filipino Brothers* (2021) which premiered at SXSW, and the award-winning *Glimmer* (2019) with Rosario Dawson. As different as they are—Jerry a 6'7" working class white DIY Metro Detroit brand of weirdo and Arianna a 5'1" single mom LA-raised Pinay artsy-fartsy type—there are two important things these creatives find common ground on: they are drawn to the courageous vulnerable ones in society who are willing to share their stories against all odds, and both want to amplify those voices through whatever resources they've acquired in their careers.

We made this film because sacred spaces like these should be highlighted as one of the purest examples of how we can co-exist with humanity. *Heartstorm* reflects the ethos of RecessMic, which welcomes music, dance, poetry, acting, magic, and comedy: this mic is truly open. Beyond the expansiveness of genre, age, race, sexuality, and gender, Lady B navigates into "B-Sides," a remixed presentation of the evening's work that culminates in a series of entertaining impromptu performance exercises. Lucia's story is adapted from many of Lady B's own life experiences and poetically woven together with original pieces written by the featured artists. It's like a cinematic translation of B-Sides—taking disparate material and transforming it into a new work. While the

lead cast is a diverse mix of Filipino-American, African-American, Mexican-American Acjachemen, and Vietnamese-American, their pieces reflect universal journeys of love, family, heartbreak, and identity. These are the common themes that Lucia resonates with which launches her into her memories. Proof that we can find a little bit of ourselves, regardless of race or background, in another person's story.

Although *Heartstorm* is an all-new original work, no creative project manifests out of thin air. Seeds can be found in the 2003 play "(gasp)" which opened in Brooklyn and evolved into the play "*Heartstorms*," where it was a template for artists to explore their work theatrically. Arianna and Jerry knew there had to be a way to put the open mic experience onto the big screen, exploring moments of catharsis while utilizing the magic of B-Sides to see things from another perspective. This movie is not a documentary, but it is full of truth. The audience is invited to open up to these stories and characters in a way where empathy can bloom. The world of *Heartstorm* is one in which empathy is a given, and healing is offered up for the taking.

**95% People of Color Cast & Crew | 70% Female Cast & Crew | 65% LGBTQ Lead Cast**

We were able to make this film by convincing a bunch of poets, singers, rappers, comedians, and magicians to believe in our ability to take what we do every week and translate it cinematically. One of the beautiful aspects of *Heartstorm* is the collaboration of these local artists rising to the occasion to tell this story beyond the comfort of their respective genre(s). As Lady Basco often says, "James Brown wasn't born with a cape on; everyone begins somewhere." While you will recognize some household names in this film, most are just like you: up late, scratching something down, wondering if it's good enough to share. The majority of the cast in *Heartstorm* were not in pursuit of an acting career prior to the start of this production—this is their truth. They live this life and embody these values on a daily basis.

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I'm attracted to niche creative subcultures, outsider artists, and passionate amateurs. People who make things because they enjoy it—or somehow feel compelled. I love the weird ones and count myself among them.

I began attending and performing at open mics as a teenager in the early nineties. I was fascinated with all of the characters in the room, a diverse group of men and women of all ages, exposing their darkest thoughts, secrets, and traumas through poetry, spoken word, and music. These were formative experiences and as I've grown and traveled I've continued attending open mics, but have only rarely encountered anything as raw and meaningful as those early mics.

Eight years ago I went to an open mic in Los Angeles that would change my life—and eventually lead to this film. This time I was one of the older folks, and while the faces and places were different, the authenticity and depth of experience was what I had been searching for. I became part of this LA community of poets, musicians, storytellers, comedians, and other performing artists. Arianna Basco, open mic host and holder of space, and I wrote the screenplay for Heartstorm based on a mix of our experiences merged with the poetry and music from folks in our community.

My goal with this film is to explore this subculture through the eyes of a newcomer and show how performances and creative vulnerability can literally change you. It was important to me to capture the energy of these spaces as a narrative film instead of a documentary, so we can see experience that inner journey. There is a magic that can happen in these spaces, I still feel it when I go—and that's what I want to share with this film.

*Jerry White Jr.*

# CAST BIOS



**Arianna Lady Basco's** art—from film, stage, music, poetry—is forever inspired by and bound to her tribe. Arianna co-wrote and plays the sister in *THE FABULOUS FILIPINO BROTHERS*, her brother Dante Basco's directorial debut out now on HULU. She also produced and is a supporting role in feature *MY FIRST HORROR FILM* (2024) directed by world renowned poet turned filmmaker Shihan Van Clief. She is the lead in short film *BLESS* from award winning director Drea Castro. She is also the director, writer, producer, and lead of *GLIMMER* with Rosario Dawson. She has graced the stage on and off in her original play *Heartstorms*, (*gasp*), *Bern's Echo*, *Body Quakes*, *Tragic Ecstasy of Girlhood* (received the HBO Diversity Grant), *StanD* and *#DONT* (featured on CNN Philippines). She has done countless productions with her art community she helms Palms Up Academy from shows, *#RECESSmic*, teaching, to holding space. Arianna is most proud of being a single mom to her kids and is currently working on a new book of poems and the sequel to *THE FABULOUS FILIPINO BROTHERS*. She lives by the motto "You Shine, I Shine." Arianna is very much looking forward to sharing *HEARTSTORM* with the world, shining the light on this diverse, dynamic, niche yet universal collective of artists.



**Magdalena Sanchez Valencia** is a lover of words and sounds. Focused on transforming pain into purpose, rhythm and flow. Knowing that creation is our liberation she believes, wholeheartedly, that we can save ARTselves. *Heartstorm* is her feature film acting debut.



**Christopher Aguilar** is a Huntington Beach, CA native and leads a group that helps break the stigma of mental illness by presenting a play he wrote called "StanD" along with post-show discussions on mental health ([www.StanDtheplay.org](http://www.StanDtheplay.org)). He holds an MA in Music Theatre from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London and dedicates this film to his parents for their unending support and encouragement.

# CAST BIOS

**Sebastian Sozzi** is the son of two artist/freedom fighters who immigrated to the USA from Mendoza, Argentina in the early seventies. Born in NYC in 1982, Sebastian studied to become a performer at PPAS High School, Julliard, HB studios and more. Starting his career in theatre on and off Broadway helped hone his skills as an actor, singer and songwriter. Now Working primarily in TV and film, Sebastian is known for his work on TV shows such as “Fear the Walking Dead,” “Blue Bloods,” and in movies including “Batman v Superman” and “Dashing Through the Snow.”

**Aurora Blessing Basco**, aka ROR, is an actress and athlete. Having grown up from the womb in her mom’s art spaces—inherently, music is how she RORs. Her album 90241 is out now on all streaming platforms. She performs weekly at Palms Up Academy.

**Renee Buckley-Chatman**, lovingly known as “Kooki,” is a published author (“My Father’s Son,” World Stage Press) and a poet. Locally, she has graced the stages of World Stage, 5th Street Dicks, The Poetry Cafe, Da Poetry Lounge, A Mic & Dim Lights, Our Mic, RecessMic, and more. Known for her sexy nod to being in love, poetry has taken her to stages in Chicago, New York, and New Orleans—from The Apache in Atlanta, Busboys and Poets in Washington DC, to the International stages of Johannesburg and Cape Town. Kooki is a member of Diverse Verses LA, a production group that has produced the Pan African Film Festival’s Poetry Fest annually since 2016. Diverse Verses LA was nominated for Best Documentary in the Glendale Film Festival 2023.

**Madeline Dimayuga** is a seasoned musician, improviser, and filmmaker with ten years of experience under her belt. As a filmmaker, she was awarded the 2017 Wonder Woman Award from the Austin Under the Stars Film Festival for her directorial debut of her short film, “Play Pretend.” She has starred in independent comedy projects, notably “Night on Sixth” (2021), and several sketch and improvisational stage shows with Fallout Theatre and Coldtowne Theatre—both based in Austin, Texas. Since moving to Los Angeles in 2019, she has re-ignited her creative efforts towards songwriting and music performance under the stage name “Madima.” Her band, Madima and the Switch, originated from the Palms Up Academy community and has gone on to perform at historic LA venues including Hotel Cafe, The Mint LA, and The Viper Room.

**Tu Ngo** started writing poetry at the age of 14 and began making music in 2010. He is The Counselor at Palms Up Academy and at 34 years old, is making his acting debut with Heartstorm. His debut album and sophomore album, Death Is Promised and The Gold Album, respectively can be found under the moniker of MaJiK MC across all platforms. He has performed on stages up and down California and is releasing his third album, King Ngo, in 2024. NFNT Studios is a multi-creative space owned by Tu Ngo/MaJiK MC and will be opening soon for all creative endeavors including music recording, film and photography shoots, dance classes and various workshops, and will be a streaming and podcast resource as well.

# CREW CREDITS

## **Director**

Jerry White Jr.

## **Producers**

Arianna Basco

Jerry White Jr.

## **Executive Producers**

Jo Koy

Arianna Basco

Jerry White Jr.

Matthew J. Suhr

## **Associate Producers**

Geoffrey Marschall

Ashley Lanuza

## **Writers**

Arianna Basco

Jerry White Jr.

## **Cinematographer**

Geoffrey Marschall

## **Editor**

Jerry White Jr.

## **Composer**

Darryl J. Basco

# CREW BIOS

**Jerry White Jr.** has been making films since he was a teenager, getting his start with public access television in Metro Detroit during the early 90s. He is a lifelong student of DIY guerrilla filmmaking as well as a MFA graduate of USC's School of Cinematic Arts. As a director, actor, and producer, he has screened at over a hundred film festivals worldwide, winning numerous awards and securing international distribution for 20 Years of Madness, a film more than two decades in the making. In 2017, he founded the Vidlings & Tapeheads Film Festival to promote unconventional storytelling and bring together eclectic, unorthodox, and progressive filmmakers, musicians, and artists. Jerry is drawn to niche creative subcultures, outsider artists, and passionate amateurs. Heartstorm is his feature directorial debut. [www.jerrywhitejr.com](http://www.jerrywhitejr.com)

**Arianna Lady Basco** is a single mom, curator of words, and believer of dreams. Author of PALMS UP, poet, and filmmaker. She is the director and lead of the short film GLIMMER with Rosario Dawson, co-wrote and co-starred in THE FABULOUS FILIPINO BROTHERS out now on HULU, producer and actress of the upcoming MY FIRST HORROR FILM directed by Shihan Van Clief, and currently in post-production for HEARTSTORM as a co-producer, co-writer, and lead inspired by the work she does at her arts organization PALMS UP ACADEMY. Playwright of (gasp), HEARTSTORMS, and BERN'S ECHO. Arianna and her family have been recognized by the State of California, City of Artesia and Cerritos, and named "The First Filipino Entertainment Family" by the City of Los Angeles for their contribution to the arts. She has been spotted at the intersection strumming the six string and singing a tune or two. [www.palmsupacademy.com](http://www.palmsupacademy.com)

# PRODUCTION STILLS



# BEHIND THE SCENES

