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Al Otro Lado (To the Other Side)

Natalia Almada's poignant, punchy "Al Otro Lado" ("To the Other Side") (Sunset 5 Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and at the DGA 2 June 22 at 4 p.m.) chronicles 23-year-old Magdiel's decision to become an illegal immigrant. The son of a fisherman in La Reforma, Sinaloa, a region in economic crisis — and a shrinking shrimp catch but abundant opium and marijuana crops — Magdiel has but two choices if he is ever able to afford a home of his own and support a family: to become a drug trafficker or to try to cross the border into the U.S. But Magdiel has a gift that provides perspective on the plight of impoverished Mexicans: He is a singer-composer of corridos, ballads that give voice to the people and their dreams and despair — and also tell stories of the drug smugglers. Almada interweaves his story with interviews and performances with such famous corrido musicians as Los Tigres del Norte, the late, legendary Chalino Sánchez, Jenni Rivera and Jesse Morales. Los Tigres composer Paulo Vargas cuts straight to the status of illegal immigrants when he says bluntly that that the U.S. needs cheap labor and that Mexico is glad to get rid of them.