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TWO RIVER THEATER COMPANY TO PRESENT “CROSSING BORDERS,” A FESTIVAL OF PLAYS BY MEXICAN-AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS, MUSIC, AND CONVERSATIONS, JUNE 9-12, 2011

Jerry Ruiz curates the four-day festival of plays by Raúl Castillo, Tanya Saracho, Karen Zacarías, and Two River’s former Associate Artistic Director, KJ Sanchez. All events are free; for information, patrons should call 732.345.1400 or visit www.trtc.org

RED BANK, NJ—Two River Theater Company announces “**Crossing Borders**,” a four-day festival of plays written by Mexican-American playwrights, as well as music and conversations. Programmed by Artistic Director John Dias and curated by director **Jerry Ruiz**, “Crossing Borders” will include readings of plays by **Raúl Castillo** (*Two Tears in a Bucket*), **Tanya Saracho** (*El Nogalar*, an adaptation of *The Cherry Orchard*), and **Karen Zacarías** (*Mariela in the Desert*, which will be read in both English and Spanish). **KJ Sanchez**, the theater’s former Associate Artistic Director, will perform her new solo play, *Highway 47*. The festival will run **June 9-12**; all events are free, including a neighborhood party on Sunday, June 12 at 5 pm.

“The four plays that will be read in the festival encompass a wide range of theatrical styles,” says curator Ruiz. “They offer rich, deep, complicated portrayals of diverse individuals—from artists and thinkers, to old-money, land-owning families, to the working class—that break away from stereotypical depictions of Mexican or Mexican-American characters. The issue of ethnic identity is a complicated one, and this festival is designed to allow for a multiplicity of perspectives. Tanya Saracho and Karen Zacarías were both born in Mexico, Raúl Castillo was born in Texas and grew up on both sides of the border, and KJ Sanchez grew up in New Mexico. Each writer brings sophisticated, complex, and nuanced insights into both their shared cultural reference points and their profoundly different experiences and backgrounds.”

“As a theatrical adventure, ‘Crossing Borders’ will bring our audiences into a conversation with plays by some of the country’s most interesting writers,” says Dias. “Two River Theater is dedicated to creating opportunities for our patrons and our community to engage with new works and be part of the creative process, and we are excited to work with all of the playwrights in this festival, and to have Jerry as our curator and artistic collaborator.”

Recent directing credits for Ruiz include *26 Miles* by Quiara Alegria Hudes at Arizona State University; *Kiss Bessemer Goodbye* by Tencha Avila for Repertorio Español; Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* at Chalk Rep in Los Angeles; and *Rear Exit* by Mando Alvarado for INTAR.

The schedule for “Crossing Borders” is as follows. All readings and panels will take place in Two River’s Marion Huber Theater.

Thursday, June 9

6pm: Festival Launch Party sponsored by Señor Pepper

7 pm: *El Nogalar* by Tanya Saracho, directed by Jerry Ruiz

Valeria’s family is about to lose their country estate—and with it, their already precarious social status—to the local drug cartel. *El Nogalar* takes us to present-day Northern Mexico for a dramatic re-telling of *The Cherry Orchard* story.

Friday, June 10

7 pm: *Two Tears in a Bucket* by Raúl Castillo, directed by Felix Solis

After the loss of her lover, a native New Yorker travels to the border town of Mission, in South Texas, to meet his estranged family and uncover the truth about his past.

Saturday, June 11

2 pm: *Mariela in the Desert* (English-language reading) by Karen Zacarías, directed by Tanya Saracho

In the Mexican desert in the 1950s, a family of artists is brought together by the imminent death of the family patriarch—and daughter Blanca has returned home with her boyfriend, an American professor. As layers of family history are peeled away, a dark secret comes to light.

4 pm: Panel discussion with festival artists and other theater professionals

7 pm: *Highway 47* by KJ Sanchez, directed by Emily Ackerman

KJ Sanchez explores the complicated history of her hometown of Tome, New Mexico, where her family has lived for 13 generations. In this funny and personal play, KJ investigates her ancestry—and the 15-year land feud that divided her family and nearly destroyed her hometown.

Sunday, June 12

3 pm: *Mariela en el Desierto* (Spanish-language reading of *Mariela in the Desert*) by Karen Zacarías, directed by Tanya Saracho

5 pm: Neighborhood party featuring performances by the Ballet Folklórico Xochipilli Mexican Dance Troupe and music by Jorge Ventura y sus Fantasticos.

Additional information, including actors and panelists, will be announced soon. For updated information, patrons should call 732.345.1400 or visit www.trtc.org.

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TWO RIVER THEATER COMPANY, under the leadership of Artistic Director John Dias and Managing Director Michael Hurst, is dedicated to producing great classics from the American and world stage, creating new plays and musicals for the American theater, and serving its diverse and multigenerational community through unique partnerships and education programs. Founded in 1994 by Joan and Dr. Robert M. Rechnitz, Two River Theater was designated a “Major Arts Institution” by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts in 2011. Two River Theater is a member of the League of Resident Theaters (LORT), Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the New Jersey Theatre Alliance and ArtPride New Jersey.