

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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Contact: Greta Hays/Kirstin Franko
press@arenastage.org, 202-600-4056

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**CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM ANNOUNCED FOR WORLD PREMIERE OF
KAREN ZACARÍAS' TELENOVELA-INSPIRED COMEDY *DESTINY OF DESIRE*
AT ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER
SEPTEMBER 11-OCTOBER 18, 2015**

***** Arena Stage favorite Nicholas Rodriguez returns as part of all-Latino ensemble
under direction of José Luis Valenzuela *****

(Washington, D.C.) **Karen Zacarías'** new telenovela-inspired comedy *Destiny of Desire* receives its world premiere at Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, kicking off the company's 66th season with dramatic storytelling and comic fire. Zacarías, an inaugural resident playwright of the theater's American Voices New Play Institute whose previous credits include *The Book Club Play* and *Legacy of Light*, collaborates with renowned director **José Luis Valenzuela**, Artistic Director of the Latino Theater Company, to bring the Latin-American telenovela genre to life on stage. *Destiny of Desire* runs **September 11-October 18, 2015 in the Kreeger Theater.**

Arena Stage favorite **Nicholas Rodriguez** (*Mother Courage and Her Children, My Fair Lady, Oklahoma!*) returns as part of an all-Latino ensemble playing Sebastian Jose Castillo, in a cast that includes Valenzuela's daughter and son, **Esperanza America** (Los Angeles Theatre Center's *Melancholia*) and **Fidel Gomez** (Denver Center for the Performing Arts' *Just Like Us*), as Pilar Castillo and Dr. Diego Mendoza, respectively.

The cast also features **Oscar Ceville** (Gala Hispanic Theatre's *House of Desires*) as Dr. Jorge Ramiro Mendoza, **Gabriela Fernandez-Coffey** (Studio Theatre's *Water by the Spoonful*) as Fabiola Castillo, **Carlos Gomez** (Broadway's *In the Heights*) as Ernesto del Rio, **Rayanne Gonzales** (Arena's *Mother Courage and Her Children*) as Hortencia del Rio, **Cástulo Guerra** (Arena's *Animal Crackers* and *Undiscovered Country*) as Armando Castillo, **Marian Licha** (Arena's *Anna in the Tropics*) as Sister Sonia, **Elia Saldaña** (South Coast Repertory's *Jane of the Jungle*) as Victoria del Rio and **Rosino Serrano**, who plays Agustín Lara, Jr. in addition to serving as music coordinator and providing original music for the production.

"Karen Zacarías is definitely one of my favorite playwrights to work with, and when she had the idea for creating a play in the style of a telenovela, I was hooked," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "Then I read a draft—and was thrilled by her virtuosity. Arena has had a strong relationship with Karen for many years, and it's been a distinct pleasure to experience her ripening as a playwright and her ability to take on subjects no one in the American theater has thought about before."

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The play opens on a stormy night in Bellarica, Mexico, when two baby girls are born—one into a life of privilege and one into a life of poverty. When the newborns are swapped by a former beauty queen with an insatiable lust for power, the stage is set for two outrageous misfortunes to grow into one remarkable destiny.

Valenzuela adds, “*Destiny of Desire* gives me the opportunity to work with the talented Karen Zacarías and an amazing group of actors and designers to create a new play about a world of ambition, betrayal, lust, romance, assassinations and misconceptions and try to find the beauty, the humanity and love within the characters and ourselves and question how we determine our destiny.”

Adds **Zacarías**, “What happens when you take the telenovela, one of the most popular forms of storytelling in Latin America, and merge it with daring and playful theatricality? You discover a different type of drama, full of music and plot turns, that is epic, outlandish and funny, yet at its core, tragic, human and true.”

Arena Stage is one of the seven originating theaters of the **Women’s Voices Theater Festival**, and *Destiny of Desire* is produced as part of the citywide Festival, which will feature over 50 productions in the nation’s capital region, September through October 2015. For additional information on the Festival please visit womensvoicestheaterfestival.org.

Karen Zacarías (*Playwright*) has written award-winning plays including *The Book Club Play*, *Legacy of Light*, *Mariela in the Desert*, *The Sins of Sor Juana*, the adaptations of *Just Like Us* and *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent* and many more. She collaborated on the libretto for *Sleepy Hollow* and *Hemingway: The Sun Also Rises* for the Washington Ballet. The 2016 season will see world premieres of her plays *Destiny of Desire* at Arena Stage; *Native Gardens* at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park; *Oliverio: A Brazilian Twist* at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; *Ella Enchanted: The Musical* at First Stage and *Into the Beautiful North* at Milagro Theater. She is one of the inaugural resident playwrights at Arena Stage and is a core founder of the Latino Theatre Commons. She is the founder of Young Playwrights’ Theater, an award-winning theater company that teaches playwriting in local public schools in Washington, D.C. Karen lives in D.C. with her husband and three children.

José Luis Valenzuela (*Director*) is the Artistic Director of the Latino Theater Company (LTC) and the Los Angeles Theatre Center (LATC) and is also the head of the MFA directing program at UCLA’s School of Theater, Film & Television. José is an award-winning theater director and has been a visionary and an advocate for Chicano/Latino theater for over 29 years. He has directed critically-acclaimed productions at major theaters both internationally and nationally including the LATC, where he created the Latino Theatre Lab in 1985, and the Mark Taper Forum, where he established the Latino Theater Initiative in 1991. José also serves on the national steering committee of the Latina/o Theatre Commons and produced the historic national Latina/o theater festival *Encuentro* in 2014.

Cast Biographies (in alphabetical order)

Esperanza America (*Pilar Castillo*) was born and raised in East L.A. and completed her BA at UCLA’s School of Theater Film and Television. Her most recent theater credits include *Habitat*, *The Vault: Bankrupt* and *The Vault: Unlocked* by The Vault Ensemble; *Faith, Hope and Charity* and *Dementia* by Evelina Fernandez; and *Melancholia* at the LATC and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, directed by José Luis Valenzuela. Her television credits include *Southland* and *Single Ladies*. Her movie credits include *Cry Now*, directed by Alberto Barboza; *Water and Power*, directed by Richard Montoya; *Gino’s Wife*, directed by Aaron Lee Lopez; and, most recently, *31*, directed by Rob Zombie.

Oscar Ceville (*Dr. Jorge Ramiro Mendoza*) makes his Arena Stage debut. D.C. credits include *The House of Desires* (Don Juan), *The Young Lady from Tacna* (Cesar), *Anna in the Tropics* (Juan Julian) and *The Knight From Olmedo* (Don Fernando) with Gala Hispanic Theatre; *Zorro* (Constellation Theatre); *The New World Order and Other Plays* (Scena Theatre); and *Host & Guest* (Synetic Theatre). Oscar is a company member of Factory 449. Regional credits include *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Caiaphas), *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (Atahualpa), *Corpus Christi* (Matthew), *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told* (Adam) and *Jeffrey* (Steve). In Panama, he received the Escena Award for Best Supporting Actor in a Play for his performance in Alan Ayckbourn’s *How the Other Half Loves*. He has also voiced TV and radio programs.

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Gabriela Fernandez-Coffey (*Fabiola Castillo*) makes her Arena Stage debut. Other D.C.-area credits include *Uncle Vanya*, *The Lyons* and *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* at Round House Theatre; *Mockingbird* at the Kennedy Center; *Detroit*, *Gruesome Playground Injuries* and *Stunning* at Woolly Mammoth; *Water by the Spoonful* and *The Motherf---er with the Hat* at Studio Theatre; and *After the Fall* at Theater J, for which she won a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress. She is a Woolly Mammoth Company Member and graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

Carlos Gomez (*Ernesto del Rio*) is thrilled to be making his Arena Stage debut. On Broadway, he originated the role of Kevin Rosario in the Tony Award-winning musical *In the Heights*. Other theater credits include *Zorba*, *West Side Story*, *Once Removed* and *Living Out* (Mark Taper Forum). Film credits include *Desperado*, *Fools Rush In*, *The Negotiator*, *Dolphin Tale 2*, *House of Sand and Fog* and *The Perfect Game*. On television he was awarded three Imagen Awards and nominated for an Alma Award for his part as Carlos Sanchez in the A&E television series *The Glades*. Additional TV credits include *Friends*, *ER*, *Charmed*, *24*, *Shark*, *Criminal Minds*, *Weeds*, *Castle* and *Gang Related*.

Fidel Gomez (*Dr. Diego Mendoza*) was born and raised in East L.A. and is a proud graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts where he received a BFA in theater. His stage credits include the national tour of *Placas*; *Just Like Us* at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts; the national tour of *Solitude*; *Melancholia*, *The Vault: Bankrupt* and *The Vault: Unlocked* at LATC; and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Romeo and Juliet* at Shakespeare Festival LA. His film and television credits include HBO's *Walkout*, *NCIS*, *Undercovers*, *Grey's Anatomy* and *7th Heaven*.

Rayanne Gonzales (*Hortencia del Rio*) returns to Arena Stage following her appearances in *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Music Man*, *Damn Yankees* and *Señor Discretion Himself*. She was also recently in *Man of La Mancha* at Shakespeare Theatre Company. Broadway credits include *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Hands on a Hardbody*. Rayanne's other credits include *South Pacific* (North Carolina Theatre and Casa Mañana), *Porgy & Bess* (Natchez Festival), the first national tour of *In the Heights* and NBC's *The Sound of Music Live!*. An alumna of Boston University, the Longy School of Music and The Banff Centre, her honors include the National Federation of Music Clubs, Metropolitan Opera Auditions and Plácido Domingo's *Operalia*.

Cástulo Guerra (*Armando Castillo*) returns to Arena Stage after performing 33 years ago in *Galileo*, *The Suicide*, *Animal Crackers* and *Undiscovered Country*. He debuted at the Delacorte Theatre in *Othello* with Raúl Julia and *Coriolanus* with Morgan Freeman, followed by *Watch on the Rhine* and *Much Ado About Nothing* at Center Stage. At the Mark Taper Forum he performed in JoAnne Akilaitis' *Greencard*, and at La Jolla Playhouse he was Prospero in Robert Woodruff's *The Tempest*. With the Latino Theater Company, he played the Bishop in *La Virgen de Guadalupe* at the Cathedral of Los Angeles for 14 years and performed in *Lysistrata* and *La Olla* at the Getty, all directed by José Luis Valenzuela. Film credits include *Terminator 2*, *The Usual Suspects*, *The Mexican*, *Alamo*, *Beverly Hills Chihuahua 2*, *Bless Me Ultima* and *Purge 2*.

Marian Licha (*Sister Sonia*) returns to Arena Stage. Her favorite roles include Ofelia in *Anna in the Tropics*, directed by Jo Bonney at Arena Stage, and Ferula and Count Satigny in *The House of Spirits* at Gala Hispanic Theatre. Other stage credits include Roundhouse Theatre, Provincetown Playhouse, TOMI Theatre, Repertorio Espanol and the Kennedy Center, where she played Elena in their national tour of *Maggie Magalita*. She portrayed Imelda on television's *Homicide* and Mrs. Serrano in the film *Step Up 2*. She received an MCAC Theatre Fellowship in 2000, and in 2010, the Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artists Award for her solo performance in the title role of her solo show *Frida Vice-Versa* (director Jessica Lefkow, co-writer R. Dennis Green), seen at The Chautauqua Festival and other sold-out venues.

Nicholas Rodriguez (*Sebastian Jose Castillo*) returns to Arena Stage where his credits include Curly in *Oklahoma!* (Helen Hayes Award, Outstanding Lead Actor in a Musical), Eilif in *Mother Courage and Her Children*, Freddy in *My Fair Lady* (Helen Hayes nomination), Fabrizio Nacarelli in *The Light in the Piazza* and the cabaret *The Power of Two*

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with Eleasha Gamble. On Broadway, he performed the title role in Disney's *Tarzan*. Off-Broadway, he's appeared in *The Toxic Avenger*, *Almost Heaven*, *Bajour* and *Collete Collage*. Tours include *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Jesus), *Evita* (Che) and *Hair* (Claude). He participated in *Guys and Dolls* at Carnegie Hall and *I Am Harvey Milk* at Lincoln Center. Regional credits include *The Ten Commandments* (Kodak Theatre), *Mothers and Sons*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Damn Yankees*, *Cinderella*, *South Pacific*, *Master Class*, *Love, Valour, Compassion!* and *The King and I*. He was in the film *Sex and the City 2* and featured on the film's soundtrack. For TV, *Madam Secretary*. He's perhaps best known for his portrayal of Nick Chavez on ABC's *One Life to Live* (GLAAD Media Award). Nicholas is the artistic director of the Broadway Dreams Foundation. His debut album, *The First Time...*, is available on iTunes and at www.psclassics.com. He holds a BM and MM in Vocal Performance from the University of Texas at Austin.

Elia Saldaña (*Victoria del Rio*) hails from Los Angeles and makes her Arena Stage debut. Regional credits include the musicals *Ivy & Bean* (Bean) and *Jane of the Jungle* (Kayla) at South Coast Repertory (the latter with book and lyrics by Karen Zacarías); *The Anatomy of Gazellas* (Alex) with Playwrights' Arena; *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* (Maria Elena) with Theatre League; and *Family Planning* (Jilly) at Chalk Repertory, for which she received an Ovation Award nomination. She has also worked with Denver Center Theatre, The Pasadena Playhouse, Latino Theater Company and National Theatre for Children, among others. TV/film credits include *Jane the Virgin*, *Criminal Minds*, *The Cleveland Show*, *The LeBrons* and *Bella and The Bulldogs*. She received her BA in theater from The University of California, San Diego.

Rosino Serrano Rosino Serrano (*Agustín Lara, Jr./Pianist/Composer/Music Coordinator*) was born in Spain and has been part of the musical scene of Mexico since the early 80's. For the last two decades he has shared his professional life between New York, Los Angeles and Mexico City. He served as composer/musical director for numerous theatrical productions with Thalia Spanish Theatre, Central Park Summerstage and Compañía Nacional de Teatro, among others. He is a regular collaborator with the Latino Theater Company. A renowned film composer, Rosino has scored iconic features including the Oscar-nominated *The Crime of Father Amaro*, *Santitos* and *Walkout*. Either as a pianist, MD, composer, arranger or producer, Rosino has worked alongside prominent artists including Eugenia León, Armando Manzanero, Santana, Ivan Lins, Camila and many others. He is a faculty member at ITESM in Mexico City and an Artistic Member of *Sistema Nacional de Creadores de Arte* (CONACULTA / FONCA).

The creative team for *Destiny of Desire* includes set designer **Francois-Pierre Couture**, costume designer **Julie Weiss**, lighting designer **Pablo Santiago**, sound designer **John Zalewski**, wig designer **Anne Nesmith**, original music/music coordination by **Rosino Serrano**, stage manager **Kurt Hall** and assistant stage manager **Trevor Riley**.

For full company bios and additional production information visit arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/destiny-of-desire.

Destiny of Desire is generously sponsored by Beth Newburger Schwartz and John W. Layman and is the recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award.

Destiny of Desire Special Events

***Subverting Expectations: Women's Work in Theater*—October 11, 2015 at 3:30 p.m.**

What is feminist theater—is it simply a play written by a woman or is there more to it? How are plays by women different? Would you know a play was written by a woman by the writing alone? From comedy to drama to musicals, in solo shows, ensemble pieces or epic sagas, women playwrights are not only breaking the fourth wall, they're breaking the glass ceiling. Arena Stage playwrights Allison Engel, Margaret Engel (*Erma Bombeck: At Wit's End*) and Karen Zacarías (*Destiny of Desire*) discuss how women are seen and received in theater by audiences and artists, how they're subverting those expectations and what's next. Now that women have the world's attention, what will they do with it?

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Post-Show Conversations

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff, September 30, October 6 and October 14 following the noon performance; October 6 following the 7:30 p.m. performance; and October 8 following the 8:00 p.m. performance.

Production Information:

[Destiny of Desire](#)

By Karen Zacarías

Directed by José Luis Valenzuela

In the Kreeger Theater / September 11-October 18, 2015

ABOUT: On a stormy night in Bellarica, Mexico, two baby girls are born—one into a life of privilege and one into a life of poverty. When the newborns are swapped by a former beauty queen with an insatiable lust for power, the stage is set for two outrageous misfortunes to grow into one remarkable destiny. “A writer of comedic skill” (*Variety*), Helen Hayes Award-winning playwright Karen Zacarías (*The Book Club Play*) infuses the Latin American telenovela genre with music, high drama and burning passion to make for a fast-paced modern comedy. Part of the Women's Voices Theater Festival.

CAST:

Pilar Castillo: Esperanza America
Dr. Jorge Ramiro Mendoza: Oscar Ceville
Fabiola Castillo: Gabriela Fernandez-Coffey
Ernesto del Rio: Carlos Gomez
Dr. Diego Mendoza: Fidel Gomez
Hortencia del Rio: Rayanne Gonzales
Armando Castillo: Cástulo Guerra
Sister Sonia: Marian Licha
Sebastian Castillo: Nicholas Rodriguez
Victoria del Rio: Elia Saldaña
Augustín Lara, Jr.: Rosino Serrano

CREATIVE TEAM:

Director: José Luis Valenzuela
Set Designer: Francois-Pierre Couture
Costume Designer: Julie Weiss
Lighting Designer: Pablo Santiago
Sound Designer: John Zalewski
Wig Designer: Anne Nesmith
Original Music/Music Coordination: Rosino Serrano
Stage Manager: Kurt Hall
Assistant Stage Manager: Trevor Riley

Plan Your Visit

TICKETS: Tickets for *Destiny of Desire* are \$40-\$90, subject to change and based on availability, plus applicable fees. For information on savings programs such as Pay-Your-Age tickets, student discounts, Southwest Nights, and Hero's Discounts, visit arenastage.org/shows-tickets/single-tickets/savings-programs. **Tickets may be purchased online at arenastage.org, by phone at 202-488-3300 or at the Sales Office at 1101 Sixth St., SW, D.C.**

Sales Office/Subscriptions: 202-488-3300
Group Sales Hotline for 10+ Tickets: 202-488-4380
TTY for deaf patrons: 202-484-0247
Info for patrons with disabilities: 202-488-3300

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PERFORMANCE DATES:

Sunday, Tuesday & Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, Friday & Saturday at 8:00 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday at 2:00 p.m.

Weekday matinees at noon on Wednesday, 9/30; Tuesday, 10/6 & Wednesday, 10/14

Full calendar: tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=20385

Open-captioned performances: 10/14 at 7:30 p.m. & 10/15 at 8:00 p.m.

Audio-described performance: 9/26 at 2:00 p.m.

CATWALK CAFÉ: Prix fixe meals are now available at the Catwalk Café and include a choice of soup or salad, main entrée and dessert. Pre-ordered meals are only \$22 (\$25 if purchased that day). To pre-order and see the menu, call 202-488-3300 or visit arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/the-cafe/. The Catwalk Café opens two hours before the show, and reservations are recommended.

To **pre-order drinks** from the Catwalk Café for up to 50% savings (\$6 house wine and beer), visit tickets.arenastage.org/cart/precart.aspx?p=1007.

METRO: Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is only one block from the Waterfront-SEU Metro station (Green Line). When exiting the station, walk west on M Street toward Sixth Street, and the main entrance to the Mead Center is on the right.

PARKING: Parking is available in Arena Stage's on-site garage. Subscribers may purchase parking in advance for \$16. Single ticket buyers may purchase parking in advance for \$19 or on the day of the performance for \$22 on a first-come, first-served basis. Limited handicapped parking is available by reservation. Advanced parking must be reserved by calling 202-488-3300. The entrance to the Mead Center garage is on Maine Avenue between Sixth and Seventh streets, and the garage closes one hour after the day's last performance ends. Patrons can also park at the Public Parking Garage at 1101 Fourth Street, one block from the Mead Center, for \$11. Street parking is also available along Maine Avenue.

VALET PARKING: Arena Stage offers valet service at no additional cost to patrons with accessibility needs who call 202-488-3300 in advance to request valet parking. On days when valet parking is being used for accessibility, it is also available to general patrons one hour prior to show time for \$25, based on availability. To use valet parking, pull up to the main entrance on Sixth Street.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Producer Edgar Dobie, is a national center dedicated to American voices and artists. Arena Stage produces plays of all that is passionate, profound, deep and dangerous in the American spirit, and presents diverse and ground-breaking work from some of the best artists around the country. Arena Stage is committed to commissioning and developing new plays through the American Voices New Play Institute. Arena Stage impacts the lives of over 10,000 students annually through its work in community engagement. Now in its seventh decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. arenastage.org.

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