



Media Contact:
Zenon Dmytryk
Geffen Playhouse
zenond@geffenplayhouse.org
310.966.2405

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CAST ANNOUNCED FOR JOSÉ RIVERA'S
"THE UNTRANSLATABLE SECRETS OF NIKKI CORONA"**

A GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE WORLD PREMIERE DIRECTED BY JO BONNEY

**FEATURING RICARDO CHAVIRA, SARA KOVIK, ZILAH MENDOZA,
ONAHOUA RODRIGUEZ AND JUAN FRANCISCO VILLA**

PREVIEWS BEGIN SEPTEMBER 4; OPENING NIGHT IS SEPTEMBER 12

LOS ANGELES (August 9, 2018) – Geffen Playhouse today announced the full cast for its production of Academy Award-nominated and Obie Award-winning José Rivera's (*Motorcycle Diaries*, *References to Salvador Dalí Make Me Hot*) *The Untranslatable Secrets of Nikki Corona*, directed by Obie Award- and Drama Desk Award-winning Jo Bonney (*By the Way*, *Meet Vera Stark*; *Cost of Living*). This world premiere marks the launch of Artistic Director Matt Shakman's inaugural season for Geffen Playhouse.

The cast features Ricardo Chavira (*The Motherf**ker with the Hat*, *Desperate Housewives*) as Orlando; Sara Koviak (*Marisol*, *Damnation of Faust*) as Maren and Lisandra; Zilah Mendoza (*Living Out*, *Modern Family*) as Noelle, Paloma, Bobbi and Maria Sol; Onahoua Rodriguez (*Lydia*, *Weeds*) as Abril and Nikki; and Juan Francisco Villa (*Oedipus El Rey*, *Chicago PD*) as Manny, Priest, Bernardo, Eldon and Felipe.

Previews for *The Untranslatable Secrets of Nikki Corona* begin Tuesday, September 4 in the Gil Cates Theater at the Geffen Playhouse, with opening night on Wednesday, September 12. The production closes on Sunday, October 7.

The Untranslatable Secrets of Nikki Corona is a poignant journey through love, hope and the unknown. How many of us have wished for one more chance to say the right thing? A Better Orpheus Inc. provides an alternative to regret—a service that allows the living to communicate with the dead. When Nikki Corona loses her twin sister, A Better Orpheus puts her in touch with Orlando, a man dying too young. The ensuing love story leads to a quest through a vivid, fantastical afterlife as Orlando learns whether Nikki's message to her sister has the ability to transcend death.

The Untranslatable Secrets of Nikki Corona is a recipient of the Edgerton Foundation New Play Award. Major support for this world premiere production is provided by the Edgerton Foundation New Play Production Fund.

THE UNTRANSLATABLE SECRETS OF NIKKI CORONA

Written by **José Rivera**

Directed by **Jo Bonney**

Previews: Tuesday, September 4 – Tuesday, September 11, 2018

Opening Night: Wednesday, September 12, 2018

Closing Night: Sunday, October 7, 2018

CAST

Ricardo Chavira as Orlando

Sara Koviak as Maren, Lisandra

Zilah Mendoza as Noelle, Paloma, Bobbi, Maria Sol

Onahoua Rodriguez as Abril, Nikki

Juan Francisco Villa as Manny, Priest, Bernardo, Eldon, Felipe

PRODUCTION TEAM

Scenic Designer **Myung Hee Cho**

Costume Designer **Stephanie Kerley Schwartz**

Lighting Designer **Lap Chi Chu**

Sound Designer **Cricket S. Myers**

Projection Designer **Hana S. Kim**

Dramaturg **Rachel Wiegardt-Egel**

Production Stage Manager **Ross Jackson**

Assistant Stage Manager **Julie Renfro**

Casting Director **Phyllis Schuringa, CSA**

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Monday	No performance
Tuesday – Friday	8:00 p.m.
Saturday	3:00 and 8:00 p.m.
Sunday	2:00 and 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION

Gil Cates Theater at the Geffen Playhouse
10886 Le Conte Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets currently priced at \$30.00 - \$120.00. Available in person at the Geffen Playhouse box office, by phone at 310.208.5454 or online at www.geffenplayhouse.org. Fees may apply.

Rush tickets for each day's performance are made available to the general public 30 minutes before showtime at the box office. \$35.00 General / \$10.00 Student

COLLEGE AUDIENCES

Through a variety of events and other opportunities, the Geffen Playhouse welcomes college students to experience the live storytelling presented on our stages. We are proud of our association with UCLA's School of Theater, Film, and Television, and open our doors to all college students throughout Los Angeles. More information is available at www.geffenplayhouse.org/college.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

José Rivera (Playwright)

The first Puerto Rican screenwriter to be nominated for an Academy Award, for *The Motorcycle Diaries*, Rivera is also the author of 26 full-length plays including the Obie Award-winning *Marisol* and *References to Salvador Dalí Make Me Hot*, both produced at the Public Theater, New York. Other plays include *Cloud Tectonics* (Playwrights Horizons), *School of the Americas* (Public Theater), *The Maids* (INTAR), *Adoration of the Old Woman* (INTAR), *Massacre (Sing to Your Children)* (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater), *Brainpeople* (ACT, San Francisco), *Sonnets for an Old Century* (Barrow Group), *Another Word for Beauty* (Goodman Theatre), *Boleros for the Disenchanted* (Yale Repertory Theatre), *The Street of the Sun* (Mark Taper Forum), *Sueño* (Manhattan Class Company) and *Lovesong (Imperfect)* (Chaskis Theatre, London). Screenplays include *On the Road*, *The 33*, *Trade*, *Letters to Juliet* and *A Thousand Miles to Freedom*. Rivera co-created and produced the NBC series *Eerie, Indiana*, and has written pilots for HBO, TNT and Showtime. Awards include a Fulbright Arts Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts grant, a McKnight Fellowship, a Rockefeller Grant, a Whiting Foundation Award and New York Council for the Arts grant. Rivera has mentored the Sundance Screenwriting Lab in Utah, Jordan and India, and leads the New York-based Writers Group.

Jo Bonney (Director)

Jo Bonney has directed premieres of plays by Alan Ball, Eric Bogosian, Culture Clash, Eve Ensler, Jessica Goldberg, Danny Hoch, Neil LaBute, Warren Leight, Martyna Majok, Lynn Nottage, Dael Orlandersmith, Suzan-Lori Parks, Darci Picoult, John Pollono, Will Power, David Rabe, José Rivera, Seth Zvi Rosenfeld, Diana Son, Universes, Naomi Wallace and Michael Weller, and productions of plays by Caryl Churchill, Nilo Cruz, Anna Deavere Smith, Charles Fuller, Lisa Loomer, John Osborne, Carey Perloff and Lanford Wilson. She has directed at American Repertory Theater, Performance Space 122, Public Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, Second Stage Theater, Goodman Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, MCC Theater, Geffen Playhouse, Williamstown Theatre Festival, McCarter Theatre Center, Playwrights Horizons, Arena Stage, Mark Taper Forum, Signature Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, New Group, Classic Stage Company, Humana Festival, Royal Court Theatre, Almeida Theatre (London), Edinburgh Festival, Market Theatre (Johannesburg), Baxter Theatre Centre (Cape Town) and Cine 13. She is the recipient of a Lucille Lortel Best Musical and Lucille Lortel Best Revival, a Drama Desk nomination for *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*, an Audelco Award for *Father Comes Home from the Wars*, an Obie Award for Sustained Excellence of Direction and a Lilly Award.

Ricardo Chavira (Orlando)

Ricardo Chavira is a South Texas native whose acting career spans theater, film and television. His stage highlights include *The Motherf**ker with the Hat* at the National Theatre in London and the Off-Broadway production of *Jesus Hopped the A Train*. He has also appeared in regional theater productions across the U.S., including *An Enemy of the People* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* at the Guthrie Theater, *Living Out*, *Tracers*, *Three Sisters*, *Dogeaters*, *¡Bandido!* and *Macbeth*. His television credits include *Scandal*; *Jane the Virgin*; *Santa Clarita Diet*; *Hawaii 5-0*; *Castle*; *Burn Notice*; *Welcome to the Family*; *Desperate Housewives*, garnering two SAG Awards for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Comedy Series; *George Lopez*; *24*; *Joan of Arcadia*; *JAG*; *NYPD Blue*; *The Division* and *Six Feet Under*. On the film side, he has appeared in *Being Charlie*, *Powder and Gold*, *Don't Let Me Drown*, *The Alamo*, *Piranha 3-D* and *Saving God*. Chavira holds an M.F.A. in acting from the University of California, San Diego.

Sara Koviak (Maren, Lisandra)

Sara Koviak is thrilled to make her debut at Geffen Playhouse! She has most recently performed in workshops in Chicago (Goodman Theatre) and Boston (Huntington Theatre Company), as well as the 25th anniversary of José Rivera's *Marisol*. Prior to her acting career, Koviak was an accomplished, lifelong classical dancer, gracing the stages of The Metropolitan Opera (Bartlett Sher's *Tales of Hoffmann*, Laurent Pelly's *Manon*, Robert LePage's *Damnation of Faust*, Mary Zimmerman's *Armida*) and David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center (*Cinderella* and *Peter and the Wolf*). Her other credits include working with Steven Schwartz as the aerial soloist in Goodspeed Musicals' tour of *Pippin; Have You Seen Calvin?* (film); *Elsinore County* at Theatre Row (also choreographer); *Oklahoma!*; *The Maids*; *One Life to Live* and Jordan Matter's *Dancers Among Us* (book). Koviak is an accomplished film and theater choreographer and current faculty at New York Film Academy and New York Conservatory for Dramatic Arts.

Zilah Mendoza (Noelle, Paloma, Bobbi, Maria Sol)

Zilah Mendoza has originated lead roles in the theater such as Ana in Lisa Loomer's hit *Living Out* (Mark Taper Forum, Second Stage Theater), Matilde in Sarah Ruhl's Pulitzer Prize-nominated *The Clean House* (Yale Repertory Theatre), Electricidad in Luis Alfaro's *Electricidad* (Mark Taper Forum) and Perla in Juliette Carrillo's *Plumas Negras* (Cornerstone Theater Company). Her performances have garnered awards including an Obie, a Garland and a Lortel nod in N.Y.C. for her work in *Living Out*, as well as numerous Backstage Awards for her work in Los Angeles. Mendoza has had recurring and guest-starring roles on *Modern Family*, *The King of Queens*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *MAD TV*, *Law & Order*, *Medium* and *24*. She is the Associate Artistic Director of the Mentor Artists Playwrights Project (MAPP), a nonprofit arts-based literacy program working in North America.

Onahoua Rodriguez (Abril, Nikki)

Onahoua Rodriguez is proud to make her Geffen Playhouse debut with José Rivera's *The Untranslatable Secrets of Nikki Corona*. She originated the role of Ceci for the Denver Center Theater production of *Lydia*, followed by productions at Yale Repertory Theatre and the Mark Taper Forum. Her other theater credits include *Anna in the Tropics* at South Coast Repertory and Coconut Grove Playhouse, *Beauty of the Father* at Seattle Repertory, *Cutting Open Wings* at the Met Theater and *Blood Wedding* at the La Jolla Playhouse, as well as roles in N.Y.C. stage productions at INTAR, MCC Theater, Theatre Row's Beckett Theatre and Repertorio Español, among others. She has guest-starred and/or recurred in numerous TV series, including *Major Crimes* (TNT), *Shameless* (Showtime), *Weeds* (Showtime), *Mad Dogs* (Amazon) and *The Shield* (FX). Rodriguez is a graduate of The American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA).

Juan Francisco Villa (Manny, Priest, Bernardo, Eldon, Felipe)

Juan Francisco Villa has appeared in the *NY Times* Critic's Pick *Oedipus El Rey*, by Luis Alfaro, directed by Chay Yew at the Public Theater in New York. He has portrayed Tennessee Williams in the Off-Broadway Abingdon Theatre Company production of *The Gentleman Caller* by Philip Dawkins at Cherry Lane Theatre. His Off-Broadway credits include *The Play About My Dad* (Collaboration Town/59E59), *Nature of Captivity* (Mabou Mines) and *One Night in the Valley* (INTAR). In Los Angeles, he starred in the autobiographical *Empanada for a Dream* (LATC), which he also wrote, and *Kissing Che* (Celebration Theater). His Chicago credits include *Twelfth Night* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); *Hillary and Clinton, Mojada* (Victory Gardens Theater); *2666, El Grito del Bronx* (Goodman Theatre); *Our Lady of 121st* (Steppenwolf Theater); *Elliot: A Soldier's Fugue* (Rivendell Theatre/Teatro Vista); *Gun Show* (16 Street Theater); and *Take Me Out* (Steppenwolf Theater Company). Villa's television credits include *Madame Secretary* (CBS), *Chicago PD* (NBC), *Blacklist: Redemption* (NBC) and *Betrayal* (ABC).

OPENING NIGHT SPONSORS

Audi of America
City National Bank
Hint
KIND Snacks
STK

###

ABOUT GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

Geffen Playhouse has been a hub of the Los Angeles theater scene since opening its doors in 1995. Noted for its intimacy and celebrated for its world-renowned mix of classic and contemporary plays, provocative new works and second productions, the not-for-profit organization continues to present a body of work that has garnered national recognition. Named in honor of entertainment mogul and philanthropist David Geffen, who made the initial donation to the theater, the company was founded by Gilbert Cates and is currently helmed by Executive Director Gil Cates, Jr., Artistic Director Matt Shakman and Board Chair Howard Tenenbaum. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen welcomes an audience of more than 130,000 each year, and maintains extensive education and community engagement programs, designed to involve underserved young people and the community at large in the arts.

www.geffenplayhouse.org

MEDIA CONTACT

Zenon Dmytryk
Geffen Playhouse
zenond@geffenplayhouse.org
310.966.2405