



Press Contacts:

Stephanie Coen, Associate Artistic Director
scoen@trtc.org or 732.936.8829

Cassie Galasetti, Associate Director of Marketing
cgalasetti@trtc.org or 732.936.8838

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**TWO RIVER THEATER ANNOUNCES ITS SIXTH ANNUAL CROSSING BORDERS FESTIVAL,
A CELEBRATION OF LATINO THEATER RUNNING AUGUST 3-7**

**Works to be read at the festival include plays by Matt Barbot, Bernardo Cubria,
Melinda Lopez, and Tanya Saracho; Brian Herrera will deliver the Opening Lecture**

**All readings and events are free; for reservations and more information, patrons should call
732.345.1400 or visit tworivertheater.org**

RED BANK, NJ— Two River Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director John Dias and Managing Director Michael Hurst, announces the lineup for its sixth annual Crossing Borders festival of new plays by Latino writers. Crossing Borders will take place August 3-7, 2016 and will include play readings, audience discussions, a keynote address from a leader within the Latino arts community, and a neighborhood kickoff party with food and live music. A company of actors, writers, directors, and other artists will be in residence throughout the festival. Crossing Borders is sponsored by The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, Bank of America, and Wells Fargo.

Over the past five years, Crossing Borders has become a mainstay within the Latino artistic community. This season, the festival will celebrate the broadest range of voices and experiences by reflecting the diversity of stories being told by Latino playwrights. Works to be read at the festival include plays by Matt Barbot, Bernardo Cubria, Melinda Lopez, and Tanya Saracho. Reservations are encouraged; patrons should contact the Two River Theater Box Office at 732.345.1400 or visit tworivertheater.org.

Crossing Borders is curated by Stephanie Ybarra, who currently serves as the Director of Special Artistic Projects at The Public Theater in New York, where she leads the Mobile Shakespeare Unit and produces the Public Forum series. She also serves as Producer's Lab Liaison for the Women's Project and Casting Director for Crossing Borders.

“This year, Crossing Borders is bringing together writers and stories from all over the country to explore questions of individual and national identity, and what it means to be a part of the Latino diaspora,” says Ybarra. “Melinda, Matt, Bernardo, and Tanya couldn’t be more different artistically, and it’s thrilling to have them all in the same space wrestling with some of the biggest questions we face today.”

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS AND READINGS

Unless otherwise noted, all readings and events will take place in Two River’s Marion Huber Theater, followed by an opportunity to meet the festival artists in the theater’s Victoria J. Mastrobuono Library.

Wednesday, August 3 beginning at 5:30pm

Neighborhood Party on the Two River Plaza Followed by a Lecture on Latino Theater by Brian Herrera

Beginning at 5:30pm, Two River will kick off Crossing Borders with an outdoor neighborhood party on the Two River Plaza, with opportunities to meet the artists involved in the festival, food, and live music. At 7pm, **Brian Herrera** will give a lecture and answer questions about the landscape of Latino theater today. Herrera is a writer, teacher and scholar at Prince University, where he is Assistant Professor of Theater. His first book, *Latin Numbers: Playing Latino in Twentieth-Century U.S. Popular Performance* (University of Michigan Press) was recognized with the George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism.

Thursday, August 4 at 7:30 pm

MALA

By Melinda Lopez

Directed by David Dower

Playwright Melinda Lopez tells of her Cuban-American mother’s final days in this beautiful one-woman play. With honesty, warmth, and a great deal of humor, Lopez grapples with the heartbreak and complications of becoming the caregiver to a parent who is losing herself.

Melinda Lopez is a playwright, actress, and educator. The inaugural Mellon playwright-in-residence at the Huntington Theatre, she is active in the Cuban American community and makes her home in Boston. **David Dower** is the Director of Artistic Programs at ArtsEmerson. Previously, he spent six seasons as Associate Artistic Director at Arena Stage where he directed the Artistic Development Team and founded the American Voices New Play Institute (AVNPI), the precursor to HowlRound: A Center for the Theater Commons now located at Emerson College.

Friday, August 5 at 7:30 pm

EL COQUÍ ESPECTACULAR AND THE BOTTLE OF DOOM

By Matt Barbot

Directed by Nelson Eusebio III

In Sunset Park, Brooklyn, a masked figure has been spotted: the Puerto Rican superhero, El Coquí Espectacular. In reality, it is comic book artist Alex, who has been secretly dressing up as his favorite creation. As Alex learns that fighting crime (and making costumes) is harder than it looks, his older brother Joe is encouraging Alex to join him at his advertising agency, where he has a job writing copy that targets Latinos. Will El Coquí use his powers for good?

Matt Barbot is a writer and actor from Brooklyn. His plays have been performed in New York, Miami, LA and Pennsylvania. *El Coquí Espectacular* has been workshopped as part of IATI Theater's Cimientos Play Development Program, and performed at The Brick's 2014 Comic Book Theater Festival. He is also a contributing writer to and former City Editor of online Latino culture and events guide *Remezcla*. **Nelson Eusebio III** is a freelance director, producer and award-winning filmmaker. He is the former artistic director of Leviathan Lab, an Asian American creative studio. In 2008 he co-founded Creative Destruction, a NYC-based theater collective.

Saturday, August 6 at 3 pm (English-language reading) and 7:30 pm (Spanish-language reading)
NEIGHBORS

By Bernardo Cubria

Directed by Lou Moreno

Meet Joe. Joe lives in a big colorless mansion. Meet Jose. Jose lives in a colorful shack. Joe and Jose live next door to each other, but they are not exactly friends. When Joe has a business proposition for Jose, their uneasy truce is about to get a lot more complicated.

Bernardo Cubria is an actor and playwright living in Los Angeles. He was born in Mexico City and grew up in Houston, Texas. He is the host of *Off and On: A New York Theatre Podcast*. **Lou Moreno** is Artistic Director of INTAR, where he has participated in over 40 productions, workshops and readings.

The 3pm reading of Neighbors will be followed by a conversation with artists from the festival.

Sunday, August 7 at 3 pm

FADE

By Tanya Saracho

Directed by Jerry Ruiz

In this biting new comedy by Tanya Saracho, Mexican-American writer Lucia is hired to write for a popular TV show. She finds relief from the cutthroat environment in her growing friendship with custodian Abel, but as the pressure increases at her job, Abel's stories start to blur with hers with unexpected consequences.

Tanya Saracho helped create Two River's Nosotros artistic outreach program, which is dedicated to fostering a closer relationship between the theater and its Latino neighbors, building demand for theater among Latino audiences, and engaging Red Bank's Latino community in a dialogue where they feel their stories are heard. *Fade* was commissioned by Denver Center and was part of DCPA's New Play Summit in 2015. She has written episodes of *How to Get Away with Murder*, *Looking* and *Devious Maids*. **Jerry Ruiz** is the former curator of the Crossing Borders festival and Associate Artistic Director of PlayMakers Repertory Company.

Schedule subject to change.

ABOUT CROSSING BORDERS

Two River Theater launched the Crossing Borders festival in 2011 to create opportunities for Latino theater artists and foster a stronger relationship between the theater and Red Bank's Latino

community. Each year the festival attracts more than 500 audience members, artists, businesses, and civic leaders. In addition to developing new plays that have gone on to full productions at Two River and elsewhere, the festival has helped spark other audience engagement initiatives, including Nosotros, an artistic outreach program dedicated to fostering a closer relationship between the theater and its Latino neighbors, building demand for theater among Latino audiences, and engaging Red Bank's Latino community in a dialogue where they feel their stories are heard. Since the first year of Nosotros, Two River has commissioned Tanya Saracho to write a play that will speak directly to the concerns of Red Bank's Latino community—drawn from the experiences and challenges specific to this community in this particular place—which will be developed at the theater under the direction of Jerry Ruiz.

SPONSORSHIP

Crossing Borders is sponsored by The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, Bank of America, and Wells Fargo.

Two River Theater is supported in part by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, Monmouth University, The Shubert Foundation, The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Meridian Health/Riverview Medical Center, The Stone Foundation of New Jersey, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Saker ShopRites, Investors Foundation, The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, Springpoint Senior Living Foundation at the Atrium at Navesink Harbor, Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Wells Fargo, William T. Morris Foundation, US Trust, Brookdale Community College, and many other generous foundations, corporations and individuals.

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Two River Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director John Dias and Managing Director Michael Hurst, creates great American theater performed by award-winning artists. We produce American and world masterpieces, and new plays and musicals. Two River Theater offers new-play commissions and artistic development activities that support the most adventurous artists in the American theater; invites its audience to be part of the creative process through readings and open rehearsals; and cultivates students and young people to participate in innovative arts-education programs and become a new generation of theatergoers. Founded in 1994 by Joan and Dr. Robert M. Rechnitz, Two River Theater is easily accessible by car, train, or bus, with great restaurants and shopping within walking distance of the theater. For more information, visit tworivertheater.org or call 732.345.1400.