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**TWO RIVER THEATER ANNOUNCES ITS FIFTH ANNUAL CROSSING BORDERS FESTIVAL, RUNNING AUGUST 5-9, WHICH WILL BRING CUBAN AND CUBAN-AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS TO RED BANK FOR A FIVE-DAY CELEBRATION OF CUBAN THEATER, FOOD, AND MUSIC FROM ON AND OFF THE ISLAND**

**All readings and events are free; for reservations and more information, patrons should call 732.345.1400 or visit [tworivertheater.org](http://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 fifth annual Crossing Borders festival of new plays by Latino writers. For the first time since the festival launched in 2011, Crossing Borders will spotlight the work of Cuban and Cuban-American writers, bringing playwrights from on and off the island together in Red Bank for a five-day celebration of Cuban theater, food, and music. The festival is sponsored by The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey and Wells Fargo.

The work of two Cuban playwrights and two Cuban-American playwrights will be featured and a company of writers, directors, and actors will be in residence at Two River throughout the festival. Crossing Borders is curated by director Jerry Ruiz and Two River's Artistic staff and will run Wednesday, August 5 through Sunday, August 9. In addition to readings of four plays (including two plays that will be read in both English and Spanish), events will include an outdoor neighborhood party with Cuban food and live music; a lecture on Cuban theater; and conversations with artists. Reservations are encouraged; patrons should contact the Two River Theater Box Office at 732.345.1400 or visit [tworivertheater.org](http://tworivertheater.org).

"New Jersey is second only to Florida as the state with the highest concentration of Cubans," says Artistic Director John Dias. "We have long been aware of the vitality, the rich legacy, and the many marvelous artists in the Cuban-American theater. Now, we are learning about what's been going on at the same time in Cuba itself. This year, as the U.S. restores full diplomatic relations with Cuba for the first time in a half-century, Two River is honored to feature the work of these artists as one theater."

## 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 5 beginning at 5:30pm**

**Neighborhood Party on the Two River Plaza, Followed by a Lecture on Cuban Theater by Yael Prizant**

Beginning at 5:30pm, Two River Theater 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; Cuban food; and live music. At 7pm, festival artist **Yael Prizant** will give a lecture and answer questions about Cuban history and theater. A translator and scholar, Prizant is the author of *Cuba Inside Out: Revolution and Contemporary Theatre* (Southern Illinois University Press).

**Thursday, August 6 at 7:30 pm**

**COCKTAIL TIME IN CUBA**

**By Rogelio Martinez**

**Directed by Lou Moreno**

In this political thriller, Michael, an American journalist, travels to Cuba in 2006 with the hope of interviewing Fidel Castro, who has recently disappeared from public view. As Michael waits for his interview, navigating the labyrinthine bureaucracy and slowly falling under the country's spell, he begins to realize that nothing in Cuba is quite what it seems.

**Rogelio Martinez** was born in Cuba and arrived in this country in 1980 during the Mariel boatlift. The winner of the first-ever Mid-Career Fellowship at the Lark Theater Company, he is the author of *Ping Pong* and *Born in East Berlin*, among other plays. **Lou Moreno** is Artistic Director of INTAR.

**Friday, August 7 at 7:30 pm (readings in both English and Spanish)**

**ANESTHESIA (English-language reading) / ANESTESIA (Spanish-language reading)**

**By Agnieszka Hernández Díaz**

**English Translation by Rogelio Martinez**

**Directed by Leyma López**

The gripping story of the last tear shed in Havana. Pedro, a successful plastic surgeon, attempts to balance an ongoing affair with a stripper and his marriage to a beautiful oncologist, Ana. Meanwhile, Pedro and Ana's daughter is seriously injured in a mugging, and a resentful former classmate attracts suspicions for the crime. By turns visceral and poetic, this short play sheds light on the complicated class dynamics and deep divisions within contemporary Cuban society.

**Agnieszka Hernández Díaz** is a playwright, screenwriter, and cultural analyst in Cuba, where she has curated the Havana International Theatre Festival. **Leyma López** was born in San José de las Lajas in Havana, Cuba and currently resides in New York, where she has directed several productions for Repertorio Español.

**Saturday, August 8 at 3 pm (English-language reading) and 7:30 pm (Spanish-language reading)**

**CHAMACO**

**By Abel González Melo**

**English Translation by Yael Prizant**

**Directed by Jose Zayas**

Two teenage boys play chess in a Havana park on Christmas Eve, and the tragic outcome of their game sends ripples through their friends and family. Through the prism of this powerful one-act play we see a portrait of the lives of quiet desperation lived by a contemporary Havana community.

**Abel González Melo** is a Cuban-Spanish playwright born in Havana in 1980. He has received numerous awards for his work, including the 2005 First Prize in Playwriting from the Spanish Embassy in Cuba for his play *Chamaco*, which has also been adapted as a film. He is currently the director of the Theatre Group at the University of Carlos III in Madrid. **Jose Zayas**, a director based in New York, previously directed *Pinkolandia* for Two River Theater.

*The 3pm reading of Chamaco will be followed by a conversation with artists from the festival including Leyma López, Abel González Melo, Yael Prizant, Rogelio Martinez, Jerry Ruiz, and Jose Zayas.*

**Sunday, August 9 at 3 pm**

**THE HUNCHBACK OF SEVILLE**

**By Charise Castro Smith**

**Directed by Jerry Ruiz**

It's morning on a freakishly cold day in 1504 Seville and Lady Maxima Terrible Segunda, the hunchbacked adopted sister of Queen Isabella of Spain, just wants to be left alone with her studies. But with her sister and the tantrum-prone princess on their way, secret disguised visitors hidden in the floorboards, plus bad news from the new world, Maxima Terrible Segunda is in for a rough day in this Monty Python-esque comedy.

**Charise Castro Smith** is a playwright and actor from Miami. Her full-length plays include: *Estrella Cruz [The Junkyard Queen]* (Ars Nova ANT Fest/Yale Cabaret) and *Boomcracklefly* (The Miracle Theater Portland, OR). Producer and director **Jerry Ruiz** is curator of the Crossing Borders festival and Executive Director of the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio, Texas.

*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 ongoing series of conversations and storytelling workshops created by playwright Tanya Saracho and festival curator/director Jerry Ruiz.

## SPONSORSHIP

The Crossing Borders festival is sponsored by The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey and Wells Fargo.

Two River Theater is supported in part by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a division within the Department of State and a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, The Stone Foundation of New Jersey, Monmouth University, Monmouth Medical Center Foundation, Wells Fargo, Investors Bank, Brookdale Community College, The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, William T. Morris Foundation, Springpoint Senior Living Foundation at the Atrium at Navesink Harbor, US Trust, 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](http://tworivertheater.org) or call 732.345.1400.