



NEWS RELEASE

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“El Nogalar”

West Coast premiere of Tanya Saracho’s
tale of humor and heartache in a changing Mexico

January 28 – March 11

LOS ANGELES, CA – January 3, 2012 – Director **Laurie Woolery** and dramaturg **Luis Alfaro** team up on an explosive tale of humor and heartache in a changing Mexico. The **West Coast premiere** of *El Nogalar* (“The Pecan Orchard”) by **Tanya Saracho** opens at **The Fountain Theatre** on **January 28**, with low-priced previews beginning January 21.



When the Galvan family returns home to Mexico after years in the U.S., they must come to terms with encroaching drug cartels, economic upheaval and a new class order. Inspired by *The Cherry Orchard*, Saracho makes Chekhov’s classic story her own, instilling it with a thrilling sense of immediacy. The deeply felt story of changing times and class divide is vividly portrayed using a mix of English, Spanish, Spanglish and Espanglés – but audiences will have no trouble understanding Saracho’s funny and complex characters.

Dunia (**Sabina Zuniga Varela**), the Galvan family’s housekeeper, watches Maité Galvan (**Yetta Gottesman**) and her daughters Valeria (**Isabelle Ortega**) and Anita (**Diana Romo**) spend their wealth and risk losing their home and beloved pecan orchard to a drug cartel. Despite warnings from Lopez (**Justin Huen**), Maité disregards her declining fortune as stubbornly as she ignores the sinister capos simmering at her doorstep.

“When I was in school, I felt that Chekhov was the most Latino playwright I came across.” explained Saracho in an interview. “I thought, ‘I know this dude, his characters. These women are my aunts, my cousins.’”

“This play humanizes what we’re reading in the news everyday,” says Woolery. “These women are from an old family, wealthy landowners with political connections. But in this new Mexico, class is turned on its ear.”

El Nogalar was developed in a staged reading during the Goodman Theatre’s Latino Theatre Festival, and premiered at the Goodman in 2011, produced and commissioned by Chicago’s Teatro Vista where Saracho is a resident playwright. American Theatre Magazine published the script in the July/August 2011 issue along with an interview with Saracho, who has been dubbed “a major playwrighting talent” by the *Chicago Tribune* and a playwright “of national stature” by *The New York Times*.

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Set design for *El Nogalar* is by **Frederica Nascimento**; lighting design is **Lonnie Rafael Alcares**; sound design is by **Peter Bayne**; costume design is by **Garry D. Lennon**; props are by **Abra Brayman**; and the production stage manager is **Mitzi Delgado**.

Housed in a charming two-story complex in Hollywood, California, The Fountain Theatre is one of the most successful intimate theaters in Los Angeles, providing a nurturing, creative home for multi-ethnic theater and dance artists. Activities include a year-round season of fully produced new and established plays; a new play development series; educational outreach programs; and off-site presentations/tours. Fountain Theatre productions have won more than 200 awards for all areas of production, performance, and design. The Fountain Theatre has the distinction of being honored with more nominations and awards than any other intimate theatre in the history of the Ovation awards, and is the only intimate theater to win the Ovation award for Best Production of a Play five times. Fountain projects have been seen in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Florida, New Jersey, Minneapolis and Edinburgh. Recent highlights include a six-and-a-half-month, sold out run of *Bakersfield Mist*, a world premiere comedy/drama by Fountain co-artistic director Stephen Sachs that has been optioned for runs in London and New York; the Fountain's Off-Broadway production of *Exits and Entrances* in New York; the making of *Sweet Nothing in My Ear* into a TV movie on CBS; and the multi-award-winning productions of *The Ballad of Emmett Till* and *Opus*. The Fountain has been honored with a Certificate of Appreciation from the Los Angeles City Council for demonstrating years of artistic excellence and "enhancing the cultural life of Los Angeles." The Fountain Theatre was recently honored with 7 Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle and 5 Ovation awards for 2010, including the Ovation for "Best Season."

El Nogalar opens on Saturday, **January 28**, with performances **Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays @ 8 pm** and **Sundays @ 2 pm** through **March 11**. Preview performances take place January 21, 22, 26 and 27 on the same schedule. Tickets are **\$25** on Thursdays and Fridays and **\$30** on Saturdays and Sundays, except opening night (June 11), which is **\$34** and previews which are **\$15**. On Thursdays and Fridays only, students with ID are **\$18** and seniors are **\$23**. **The Fountain Theatre** is located at **5060 Fountain Avenue** (at Normandie) in Los Angeles. Secure, on-site parking is available for \$5. The Fountain Theatre is air-conditioned and wheelchair accessible. For reservations and information, call **323 663-1525** or go to www.FountainTheatre.com.

About The Artists

Tanya Saracho (playwright) was born in Sinaloa, Mexico. She is a resident playwright emeritus at Chicago Dramatists, a current resident playwright at Teatro Vista, a Goodman Theatre Fellow at the Ellen Stone Belic Institute for the Study of Women and Gender in the Arts and Media at Columbia College Chicago, an artistic associate at About Face Theatre, the founder of The N Series, and the founder and former artistic director of Teatro Luna. She has been the lead artist in most of Teatro Luna's ensemble-devised works, including *Generic Latina*, *Dejame Contarte*, *The Maria Chronicles*, *Solo Latinas*, *Solo Tú*, *S-E-X-Oh!*, and *Lunatic(a)s*. Her plays include an adaptation of *The House on Mango Street* at Steppenwolf Theatre Company; *Our Lady of the Underpass* with Teatro Vista; *Surface Day* at Steppenwolf Theatre Company/ Chicago Humanities Festival; *Jarred: A Hoodoo Comedy* at Teatro Luna; *Kita y Fernanda* at 16th Street Theatre and *Quita Mitos* with Teatro Luna and Next Theatre Company. Ms. Saracho's awards and grants include the National Endowment for the Arts Distinguished New Play Development Project grant, the Goodman's Ofner Prize and the 3Arts Artists Award and the inaugural Revolucionario Award given by the National Museum of Mexican Art. She was named Best New Playwright of 2010 by *Chicago* magazine, and one of nine Latino Luminaries by *Café* magazine.

Laurie Woolery (director) is the associate artistic director of Cornerstone Theater Company. As a director and playwright, she has collaborated on many new works including *A Man Comes to Fowler*, *Jason in Eureka*, *For All Time*, *A Holtville Night's Dream*, and *3/7/11: A Lincoln Heights Tale*. Recently, Ms. Woolery directed *The Language Archive* by Julia Cho at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. As a director, playwright, educator and actor, Laurie has worked at South Coast Repertory (Director of the Theatre Conservatory), Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Denver Center, Los Angeles Theatre Center, Inge Center for the Arts, Ricardo

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Montalban Theatre, Deaf-West Theatre, fofo Theatre, Highways Performance Space, Sundance Playwrights Lab and Sundance Children's Theatre. Cornerstone Theater Company commissioned her solo play *Salvadorian Moon/African Sky* for its citywide Festival of Faith. Several of her plays *Scouting Reality*, *Bliss*, *The Hundred Dresses* and *Orphan Train: The Lost Children* have received world premieres at South Coast Repertory. Laurie is on faculty at Citrus College and California State University Northridge and serves on the Board of the Latino Producers Action Network, Network of Ensemble Theaters and the Children's Theatre Foundation of America.

Luis Alfaro (dramatug) is a Chicano writer/performer known for his work in poetry, theater, short stories, performance and journalism. He is also a producer/director who spent ten years at the Mark Taper Forum as Associate Producer, Director of New Play Development and co-director of the Latino Theatre Initiative. His plays and performances include *Electricidad* (Teatro Vision-San Jose, Mark Taper Forum-Los Angeles, Goodman Theatre-Chicago, Borderlands Theatre-Tucson), *Downtown* (Institute of Contemporary Art-London, X Teresa Performance Space-Mexico City), *No Holds Barrio* (Goodman Theatre-Chicago), *Body of Faith* (Cornerstone Theater Company-Los Angeles), *Straight As A Line* (Primary Stages-NY, Edinburgh Festival-Scotland, Goodman Theatre-Chicago, The National Theatre of Romania [2 year run]) *Bitter Homes and Gardens* (Latino Chicago, Playwrights Arena-Los Angeles) *Ladybird* (La Jolla Playhouse), *Black Butterfly* (Smithsonian Museum, The Kennedy Center-Washington D.C., Mark Taper Forum-Los Angeles) and *Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner* (Taper Too-Los Angeles, Teatro Vista-Chicago and Hartford Stage-Connecticut). Luis is the recipient of a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation fellowship, popularly known as a "genius grant," awarded to people who have demonstrated expertise and exceptional creativity in their respective fields. A Rockefeller Fellow and University of California Regents Chair Fellow, he is the only artist to have won two awards in the same year from The Kennedy Center's Fund for New American Plays. He is also the recipient of awards from the National Endowment of the Arts, Theatre Communications Group and PEN USA, among others. He is featured in over 25 anthologies, has an award-winning spoken word CD, and was nominated for a local Emmy for his short film, *Chicanismo*. He is a member of New Dramatists, an associate artist at Playwrights Arena and Cornerstone Theatre Company in Los Angeles.

Yetta Gottesman (Maité) is a member of the prestigious Actors Studio and LAByrnth Theater Company. She has appeared in numerous Off-Broadway plays including originating roles written by John Patrick Shanley and Stephen Adly Guirgis. She has performed extensively on stage, both in New York and regionally, with such luminary directors as Philip Seymour Hoffman, Joe Bonney and Lisa Peterson. In 2010, she was nominated for a Denver Post Ovation award for her performance in *Mariela in the Desert* at the Denver Center Theatre Company. Some of her film work includes *Rabbit Hole*, *Lucky You*, and *27 Dresses*.

Justin Huen (Lopez) recently appeared as Oedipus in Luis Alfaro's *Oedipus el Rey* at Theatre @ Boston Court (Ovation award nomination) and *Hero*, directed by Jon Rivera. Other credits: *Zorro* (TheatreWorks), *Strike-Slip* (Actors Theatre of Louisville), *Stones* (CTG/Kirk Douglas), *Electricidad* (CTG/Mark Taper Forum), *References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot* (Art/Works), *Palm Fever* and *Bitter Homes and Gardens* (Playwrights' Arena), *The Legend of Jane & Joe* (Ricardo Montalban Theater), *My First Radical* (Ojai Playwrights Festival).

Isabelle Ortega (Valeria)'s credits include *House of Spirits* (Clara) at Mixed Blood Theater, *Living Out* (Ana Hernandez) at Theater Works and Mixed Blood Theater, *Sonia Flew* (Nina/Pilar) for L.A. Theatre Works, *Boleros for the Disenchanted* (Petra/Monica) at the Pacific Playwrights Festival, *Anna in the Tropics* (Conchita) at PCPA, *Anna in The Tropics* (Marela) at Theatre Works, *Displaced* (Lili) at Marin Theatre, *Charlie Cox Runs w/Scissors* (Kiki) at Marin Theatre, *Macbeth* (Witch) at the California Shakespeare Festival, and *Twelfth Night* (Olivia) at Shakespeare at Stinson.

Diana Romo (Anita) began acting as a child as a member of the South Coast Repertory Young Conservatory Theater in Costa Mesa, where she made her stage debut in a production of Julia Edwards' *Lockdown*. She continued her studies there through the end of high school, going on to study theater at the University of San Diego. She moved to Los Angeles in 2010.

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Sabina Zuniga Varela (Dunia) is a founding member of the Latino theater company Teatro Nuevo Mexico, and a current member of the theater troupe Las Meganenas. She won the 2007 New Mexico Hispano Entertainer's Association: Female Performer of the Year for her roles in *Magdalena Cantata* and *Still Life* at the National Hispanic Cultural Center. A 2011 graduate of USC's prestigious MFA program, roles included Masha in Kate Burton's production of *Three Sisters* and Feste/Antonio in *Twelfth Night* directed by Andrew J. Robinson. Other favorite roles include the title role in Luis Alfaro's *Electricidad*, Rosaura in *Sueño*, and Martirio in *The House of Bernarda Alba*. She recently worked on *Dulce's Ashes*, a short film by Janine Salinas.

Details for Calendar Listings

EL NOGALAR

WHAT:

El Nogalar ("The Pecan Orchard") is inspired by Anton Chekhov's classic *The Cherry Orchard* and charts a Mexican family's experience as their way of life is threatened by encroaching drug cartels, violence and economic upheaval. Set in present-day Northern Mexico and infused with Spanish, Spanglish and Espanglés, it's a comical and moving story about the choice between adapting to the changing world or being left behind. **West Coast premiere.**

WHO:

Written by **Tanya Saracho**

Directed by **Laurie Woolery**

Starring **Yetta Gottesman, Justin Huen, Isabelle Ortega, Diana Romo, Sabina Zuniga Varela**

Dramaturg **Luis Alfaro**

Produced by **Stephen Sachs, Simon Levy** and **Deborah Lawlor**

Presented by **The Fountain Theatre**

WHEN:

Previews: Jan. 21, 22, 26, 27

Performances: **Jan. 28 - Mar. 11**

Thursdays @ 8 pm: Jan. 26 (preview); Feb. 2, 9, 16, 23; Mar. 1, 8

Fridays @ 8 pm: Jan. 27 (preview); Feb. 3, 10, 17, 24; Mar. 2, 9

Saturdays @ 8 pm: Jan. 21 (preview), 28 (Opening); Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25; Mar. 3, 10

Sundays @ 2 pm: Jan. 22 (preview), 29; Feb. 5, 12, 19, 26; Mar. 4, 11

WHERE:

The Fountain Theatre

5060 Fountain Ave.

Los Angeles CA 90029

(Fountain at Normandie)

HOW:

(323) 663-1525 or www.FountainTheatre.com

TICKETS:

Opening Night (January 28): **\$34**

Thursdays and Fridays: **\$25**

Saturdays and Sundays: **\$30**

Seniors over 62 (Thursdays and Fridays only): **\$23**

Students (Thursdays and Fridays only, with ID): **\$18**

Previews: **\$15**

Parking:

Secure, on-site parking: **\$5**