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For immediate release.

**“ZOOT SUIT” CASTING IS COMPLETE AND REHEARSALS HAVE BEGUN**  
*Center Theatre Group’s “Zoot Suit” Plays at the Taper January 31 – March 12, 2017*

Casting for Center Theatre Group’s production of “Zoot Suit” is now complete and rehearsals have begun for this legendary play with music. “Zoot Suit” begins previews January 31, opens February 12 and continues through March 12, 2017, at the Mark Taper Forum. Written and directed by **Luis Valdez**, “Zoot Suit” is presented in association with El Teatro Campesino.

In addition to the previously announced **Demian Bichir, Jeanine Mason, Rose Portillo, Daniel Valdez** and **Jeremy Ray Valdez**, the cast now also includes (in alphabetical order), **Brian Abraham, Mariela Arteaga, Melinna Bobadilla, Oscar Camacho, Stephani Candelaria, Raul Cardona, Fiona Cheung, Tiffany Dupont, Caleb Foote, Holly Hyman, Kimberlee Kidd, Rocío López, Tom G. McMahon, Andres Ortiz, Michael Naydoe Pinedo, Matias Ponce, Gilbert Saldivar, Richard Steinmetz, Evan Strand, Bradford Tatum** and **Raphael Thomas**.

Choreography for “Zoot Suit” is by **Maria Torres**, the production includes songs composed by **Lalo Guerrero**, the music director is **Daniel Valdez**, casting is by **Rosalinda Morales, Pauline O’con**, CSA, and **Candido Cornejo, Jr.**, CSA. Scenic design is by **Christopher Acebo**, costume design is by **Ann Closs-Farley**, lighting design is by **Pablo Santiago**, sound design is by **Philip G. Allen** and projection design is by **David Murakami**. The associate director is **Kinan Valdez** and the production stage manager is **David S. Franklin**.

Nearly 40 years after its world premiere, the original creator Luis Valdez will once again fill the Taper stage with a company of 25 actors, singers and dancers weaving fact and fiction together as they portray the events surrounding the infamous 1942 Sleepy Lagoon murder in Los Angeles. Filled with heart, sly wit and the infectious songs of Lalo Guerrero, “Zoot Suit” remains an urgent portrayal of the clash between generations in a Chicano family, the rifts between cultures in America and how racism and injustice can haunt a city and a society.

International stage and screen star **Demian Bichir** (Tarantino’s “The Hateful Eight,” FX’s “The Bridge,” Showtime’s “Weeds,” Soderbergh’s “Che” and “A Better Life,” Academy Award nomination) will play the indelible role of El Pachuco.

Actors **Daniel Valdez** and **Rose Portillo** are returning to “Zoot Suit” after appearing in the world premiere production at the Taper in 1978, as well as at the Aquarius Theatre in Hollywood, on Broadway and in the film. Valdez played the leading role of Henry Reyna,

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while Portillo played Della, his barrio girlfriend. The two will be reunited for this new production, with Valdez now playing Enrique Reyna (Henry’s father) and Portillo playing Dolores Reyna (Henry’s mother). Daniel Valdez will also music direct once again.

**Jeremy Ray Valdez**, who will play Henry in the new production, is an Imagen Award-winner for “La Mission,” was featured in the Sundance film “All She Can” and has guest-starred in such series as “The Mentalist” and “Castle,” among many others.

**Jeanine Mason**, who will play Della, won season five of “So You Think You Can Dance” and recently appeared in ABC’s “Of Kings and Prophets.” She also played a recurring role on ABC Family’s “Bunheads.”

“Theatre has always created an extraordinary connection between artists and audiences,” said CTG Artistic Director Michael Ritchie. “Nowhere is that more clear than in the uniquely intimate space of the Mark Taper Forum. And that connection continues well beyond the curtain call in plays like Luis Valdez’s ‘Zoot Suit,’ which changed the cultural landscape when it premiered at the Taper almost four decades ago and will continue to offer a vital insight when it opens our 50th season at the Taper in 2017.”

“Zoot Suit” was originally commissioned and developed by Center Theatre Group, playing for nearly a year in Los Angeles first at the Taper from August 6 to October 1, 1978, then from October 10, 1978, through July 1, 1979, at the Aquarius in Hollywood. It went on to become Broadway’s first Chicano play, was made into a major motion picture and became a cultural phenomenon.

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation’s preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles’ leading nonprofit theatre company, programming seasons at the 736-seat Mark Taper Forum and 1600 to 2000-seat Ahmanson Theatre at The Music Center in Downtown Los Angeles, and the 317-seat Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City. In addition to presenting and producing the broadest range of theatrical entertainment in the country, Center Theatre Group is one of the nation’s leading producers of ambitious new works through commissions and world premiere productions and a leader in interactive community engagement and education programs that reach across generations, demographics and circumstance to serve Los Angeles.

Tickets to “Zoot Suit” are available by calling (213) 628-2772, online at [www.CenterTheatreGroup.org](http://www.CenterTheatreGroup.org) or at the Center Theatre Group box office, located at the Ahmanson Theatre. Tickets range from \$25 – \$99 (ticket prices are subject to change). The Mark Taper Forum is located at the Music Center, 135 N. Grand Avenue in Downtown L.A. 90012.

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January 6, 2017