FIRST SEASON PRODUCTION

ZOOT SUIT
Written and Directed by Luis Valdez
January 31 – March 19, 2017

BONUS PRODUCTION

REMOTE L.A.
By Rimini Protokoll
Concept, script, and direction by Stefan Kaegi
Co-directed by Jörg Karrenbauer
March 12 – April 2, 2017

SECOND SEASON PRODUCTION

ARCHDUKE
By Rajiv Joseph
Directed by Giovanna Sardelli
World Premiere
April 25 – June 4, 2017

THIRD SEASON PRODUCTION

HEAD OF PASSES
By Tarell Alvin McCraney
Directed by Tina Landau
September 13 – October 22, 2017

FOURTH SEASON PRODUCTION

WATER BY THE SPOONFUL
By Quiara Alegría Hudes
Directed by Lileana Blain-Cruz
January 31 – March 11, 2018

FIFTH SEASON PRODUCTION

SOFT POWER
By David Henry Hwang
Directed by Leigh Silverman
World Premiere
April 4 – May 13, 2018
As we celebrate our 50th Anniversary Season, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the following donors who have made extraordinary investments in Center Theatre Group's future. Their support will ensure that Center Theatre Group—and Los Angeles audiences and artists—enjoy another 50 years of theatrical excellence.

Center Theatre Group would also like to thank the following donors for making commitments to the 50th Anniversary Campaign through increased giving to our Annual Fund and through legacy gifts to our Endowment:

Pamela & Dennis Beck, Anne Bruner & Jim Bremner, Nancy & Donald de Brier, Darell & Elizabeth Krasnoff, Jo Muse, Patrick Owen & Norman Dixon, Cheryl A. Shepherd, Sunshine Stone, Hope Landis Warner.

Legacy Gifts

$1,000,000 AND ABOVE
Judith & Thomas Beckman
Diane & Leon Morton

$500,000 AND ABOVE
Richard & Norma Camp
Susan A. Grode
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Other Legacy Gifts
Shirley & Irving Ashkenas, Bill Cohn & Dan Miller, Steven Llanusa & Glenn Miya, M.D., Gloria Lothrop, Carol & Douglas Mancino, Nan Rae, Randy & Bruce Ross

This production of Zoot Suit is generously supported in part by our title sponsor, Bank of America.

Zoot Suit was originally commissioned by Center Theatre Group and had its World premiere at the Mark Taper Forum in 1978.
CAST

El Pachuco ................................................................. Demian Bichir
Henry Reyna .............................................................. Matias Ponce

HIS FAMILY:
Enrique Reyna ............................................................. Daniel Valdez
Dolores Reyna ............................................................. Raul Cardona
Joey Castro ............................................................... Oscar Camacho
Elena Torres ............................................................... Rocío López
Bertha Villarreal ......................................................... Melina Bobadilla

HIS FRIENDS:
George Shearer .......................................................... Brian Abraham
Alice Bloomfield .......................................................... Tiffany Dupont

HIS GANG:
Della Barrios ............................................................. Jeanine Mason
Ismael ‘Smiley’ Torres .................................................. Raul Cardona
Tommy Roberts .......................................................... Caleb Foote
Elena Torres ............................................................... Rocío Lopez
Bertha Villareal .......................................................... Melina Bobadilla

THE DOWNY GANG:
Rafas ................................................................. Gilbert Saldivar
Guera ........................................................................ Kimberelee Kidd
Ragman ...................................................................... Michael Naydoo Pinedo

THE LAW:
Lieutenant Edwards .............................................................. Richard Steinmetz
Sergeant Smith ............................................................... Bradford Tatum

THE PRESS:
Press ................................................................. Tom G. McMahon
Cub Reporter .............................................................. Michael Naydoo Pinedo
Newsboy ..................................................................... Raphael Thomas

THE COURT:
Judge F.W. Charles .............................................................. Richard Steinmetz
Bailiff ...................................................................... Bradford Tatum

THE PRISON:
Guard ...................................................................... Richard Steinmetz

THE MILITARY:
Bosun’s Mate ............................................................... Bradford Tatum
Sailor ........................................................................ Caleb Foote, Gilbert Saldivar
Marines ..................................................................... Evan Strand
Swabbie ...................................................................... Melina Bobadilla

OTHERS: PACHUSA TRIO
La Pachuca Manchuka ..................................................... Fiona Cheung
La Pachuca Lil Blue .......................................................... Holly Hyman
La Pachuca Hoba ............................................................. Mariela Arteaga

Dance Captains ........................................................ Kimberelee Kidd, Raphael Thomas
Fight Captain ................................................................. Caleb Foote

UNDERSTUDIES
Should an understudy substitute for a listed performer, it will be posted in the lobby at the time of the performance.

Bertha Villarreal—Mariela Arteaga
Dolores Reyna—Melina Bobadilla
El Pachuco—Raul Cardona
Rudy Reyna—Oscar Camacho

THE PRESS/Lieutenant Edwards/Spaun/Press/Lieutenant Edwards/
Thomas Roberts/Cub Reporter—Bradford Tatum
Swabbie—Raphael Thomas

STAGE MANAGERS
Michelle Blair

Susie Walsh

TIME/PLACE
Fall of 1942 through fall of 1944 in the Los Angeles barrios, San Quentin Prison, and the mind of Henry Reyna.

INTERMISSION
Zoot Suit will be performed with one intermission.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Los Angeles skyline images provided by the Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection.

NEC Additional projection support generously provided by NEC and Sound Design.

Zoot suits for the “38th Street Gang, the Downey Gang, and the understudies generously supported by El Pachuco Zoot Suits, Fullerton, CA.

MUSIC

“Perdido” By Juan Tizol | Performed by Duke Ellington

“Zoot Suit Boogie” By Lalo Guerrero

“Échale Un Quinto al Piano” Music & Lyrics by Felipe Valdés Leal

“La Zenaida” By Samuel M. Lozano

“Chucos Suaves” Music & Lyrics by Lalo Guerrero

“Vamos a Bailar!” Music & Lyrics by Lalo Guerrero

“Henry and Della Theme” By Daniel Valdez

“Aquellitos Ojos Verdes” Music by Nilo Menéndez | Lyrics by Adolfo Utrera

“Marijuana Boogie” Music & Lyrics by Lalo Guerrero

“Let’s Go To Court” By Daniel Valdez

“Seyback Lagoon” By Harry James

“In the Mood” By Glenn Miller Orchestra

“Fiesta Mexicana” By Jorge Negrete

“Handball” By Daniel Valdez

“Zoot Suit Boogie” By Lalo Guerrero

“Bugle Call Rag” By Jack Pettis, Billy Meyers & Elmer Schoebel | Performed by Benny Goodman Orchestra

“American Patrol” By Frank White Meacham | Performed by Glenn Miller Orchestra

“Aztec Episode” By Daniel Valdez

“Saint Louis Blues March” By W.C. Handy & Glenn Miller

“Soldado Razo” By Felipe Valdés Leal
Occasionally a work of art emerges that defines a cultural moment and points to its future. In 1978, audiences in the United States were privileged to see such a work: *Zoot Suit*, performed first in Los Angeles and nine months later on Broadway where theatre critic Jack Kroll described the play as a “key event in the consciousness of a community.” With the benefit of hindsight, we would add, “in the consciousness of the broader community we call world culture.”

Luis Valdez, writer and director of *Zoot Suit*, speaks to this point when he says, “I wrote *Zoot Suit* for an American audience,” by which he means that the lives he is depicting should resonate beyond Chicano experience. When El Pachuco literally breaks through a giant newspaper to bound onto the stage in his black hat with its jaunty red feather, he is not only a man who wears a zoot suit of the 1940s. He is tempter, storyteller, shadow self, Aztec god, Mephistophelian devil, the embodiment of the conflicts of the play, the one who defines the play for us as real and stylized, historical fact and myth. The character refuses to be limited to any one definition; his identities are multiple.

*Zoot Suit* is a milestone in the artistic dialogue of the last quarter of the 20th century because it lays claim to an unbounded theatre that gets its juices from a particular identity but reaches beyond that identity. To this day, the play implicitly poses questions that continue to define our era: to whom does an artist speak, from what community, and beyond?

**BEFORE ZOOT SUIT**

Even before *Zoot Suit*, Luis Valdez had established himself as the leading force in Chicano theatre. The son of migrant farmworkers, Valdez first realized his vision of a Chicano theatre in the fields of Delano, California. Founded in 1965 as the cultural arm of the United Farm Workers, El Teatro Campesino began its life by performing on flatbed trucks in the middle of the fields, its actors, subject matter, and audiences all drawn from the workers who were fighting for better conditions.

It was a theatre meant to inspire, and it did. By giving back life experience transformed by humor and satire, the Teatro provided the replenishment and encouragement that the striking workers needed. By laying claim to the truth that theatre could be made from one’s own life, the Teatro spoke to students and community groups who began a national movement. By the mid-1970s, close to 100 teatros were performing in the southwestern United States, addressing a broad range of Chicano political and social concerns. In
ZOOT SUIT
The play is based on the Sleepy Lagoon Murder, the name that newspapers and radio commentators used to describe the murder of José Díaz, whose body was found at the Sleepy Lagoon reservoir in southeast Los Angeles, California, on August 2, 1942. The murder led to the criminal trial and conviction of 21 Latino young men. While the decision was later reversed on appeal, the trial itself lacked the rudiments of due process. The episode was seen as the precursor to the Zoot Suit Riots a year later when U.S. sailors and marines roamed the streets of Los Angeles, savagely attacking anyone wearing a zoot suit, that emblem of urban bravado mixed with extravagant style. More than 600 Latino youths were arrested.

It is a horrifying story of virulent racism. It is also the story of a human being, Henry Reyna, the protagonist of Zoot Suit, his face brimming with hope at the beginning of the play, disfigured by beatings, transfigured by love, defeated by demons, both outer and inner, matured and saddened by grim determination, even as his future is still in question.

It is Luis Valdez’s triumph both to give us a person whose fate matters to us as we watch his tragedy unfold, and also to create a new merger of naturalistic with expressionistic theatre so that Henry’s plight cannot be reduced to the story of one man. From the opening barrio dance it is clear that the inclusive stylistics borrow from a new generation, for there among the Chicano youth is the Japanese-American dancer, Manchuka, and Swabbie, an American (presumably Anglo) sailor. El Pachuco extends the reach to African-Americans, singing, “The Hepcats up in Harlem wear that drape shape/Como los pachucones down in L.A.” Nothing like this had been seen on the American stage; an outpouring of energy, inventiveness, of tragedy mixed with comedy, of the Brechtian European tradition put into the bodies of urban street kids.

One defining moment is the encounter between Henry and El Pachuco when Henry is already in jail. “Go into the barrio of the mind,” El Pachuco whispers in his ear, “forget the barrio, forget the family,” offering the temptation of oblivion, of drugs. Henry speaks back to El Pachuco in what is far more than a simple rejection of temptation. He undergoes a series of dawning revelations: what begins as an accusation (“You’re the one who got me here”) becomes an acknowledgment of self. “You’re my worst enemy, best friend. Myself.”

Until this point, opposites have dominated the play as outward manifestations; when Henry is about to enlist, he is told, “Forget the war overseas; yours is on the home front.” Now the audience feels that the play is also serving the inner life, that Henry will no longer feel torn apart but rather, in the Walt Whitman sense, he will know that he contains multitudes.

The towering strength of the play is that it does not try to reconcile opposites but rather to admit them into a range of possibilities, perhaps most obviously so in its variant endings. There is the “official” tragic ending, in which an imprisoned Henry becomes a killer himself. Then there is another possibility: Henry is killed in the Korean War. Or he marries his sweetheart and raises his family in Los Angeles. Or…?

There are no answers and no inevitable future. These are possibilities that belong to all of us, existential choices and life trajectories that are real and possible, all part of the layered life of the play.

ZOOT SUIT AND THEATRE IN THE AMERICAS
Theatre in the United States has always sought its distinctive voice, one that defined it as separate from its European theatrical inheritance. What does it mean, that elusive notion of an “American theatre?” This was a question posed by Clifford Odets and Arthur Miller in mid-century America, answered through the prism of immigration, class, and the dangers of McCarthyism. What does it mean to speak of the American experience? Or experiences? This is a question posed in the ’60s and the ’70s, when distinctiveness was emerging from the nation’s diversity, and racial, ethnic, and gendered groups put forth the claims of separate identities. In the ’70s and ’80s, previously unheard voices emerged, all challenging the narrow definitions of what theatre could be. Along with the development of Chicano theatre, African-American, Caribbean, feminist, and Asian-American artists were all entering into a productive fray, creating work that was shaped by the challenge of finding new artistic ways of representing identity.

In the work of Luis Valdez, we see something different: an explicit tension between community and the broader world. Valdez’s work presents a plurality of voices and points of entry that Valdez says is the American experience. That definition is why Valdez is especially pertinent to our time now. As Valdez put it in a 1988 interview in American Theatre magazine: “I feel that the whole question of the human enterprise is up for grabs.”

The question posed by Zoot Suit’s radical theatrical terms of 1978 is: what sort of alternatives exist in the United States, beyond racism and violence? Various possibilities are portrayed: the creation of an emblematic style such as that of the pachuco, heroic but self-destructive; the multi-ethnic composition of the defense committee that effectively worked with the families of the Chicano youth to win their
In the nearly four decades since Zoot Suit, much has changed, but the challenges it posed still stand, demanding a renewed vision of the United States and theatre of Central and South America.

Zoot Suit

It has not really come to terms with the cultural question of what America is.

In 1970, Janet Sternberg, writer and photographer, discovered an unopened box at National Educational Television containing videos of early actors; these became the basis for her 1970 feature documentary El Teatro Campesino, broadcast nationally and shown at the New York Film Festival and the New York Experimental Television Festival.

Some of her credits include: Theatre: Steve Wynn's ShowStoppers (Encore Theatre); TV: Jane the Virgin, General Hospital, Harry's Law, and Deal or No Deal.

Copyright 2016 Steven Lavine and Janet Sternburg. This essay was originally commissioned by the U.S. Embassy, Mexico, as an introduction to the 2013 Spanish-language version of Zoot Suit.
out for.” Relatively new to the theatre world, Stephani has appeared in El Teatro Campesino’s La Virgen del Tepeyac and La Pastorela, and Casa 0101’s Trio Los Machos.

RAUL CARBONA (Ismael ‘Smiley’ Torres, understudy for El Pachuco) is delighted to partake in this historic Center Theatre Group production. A veteran musical theatre actor, dancer, and singer, Raul has performed in musical productions such as The War and Fame. He has also starred in many El Teatro Campesino (ETC) productions including Bandido and the World premieres of Conchita Remixed and Murmuration, and played El Pachuco in the 25th Anniversary National Tour of ETC’s Zoot Suit. Other touring credits include work with Lalo Guerrero’s Trio Los Machos. TV: Reckless, Franklin & Bash, Rock Paper Dead (opposite Taye Diggs and Kathleen Robertson). Other television credits include appearances on CSI: NY, The Whole Truth, and Melrose Place, among others. Film work includes portraying Queen Esther in One Night with the King (2006), opposite Omar Sharif and Peter O’Toole, for which she won a CAMIE award. She also starred in The Work and the Glory (2004) and Cheaper by the Dozen opposite Steve Martin (2003).

CELAB FOOTE (Tommy Roberts/Marnell, Regional: Teenage Dick (National Playwrights Conference at the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center), Los Angeles: Harrel & Getlei Bluegrass (24th Street Theatre), Education: University of Michigan, BFA theatre performance. This is his Grandma Peggy. A huge thank you to my loving family, Ashley Wible of KMR, and Ricky Rollins.

HOLLY HYMAN (La Pachuca Lil Blue, National/International tours: Alley II; Ladies First w/ Missy Elliott: As I Am w/Alìcia Keys; The Original High w/Adam Lambert. Broadway: Wicked (ensemble), LAADF companies, Joe Mantello), Los Angeles musical theatre:Twist: An American Musical (ensemble) Josephine Baker understudy, Pasadena Playhouse, Debbie Allen); Take On Me (featured, Prospect Theatre, Willie Ferguson III, Jamil Sims). Award shows: BET, AMMA, Soul Train, I Heart Radio, Billboard, etc. Film: Hairspary (principal, Adam Shankman); Across the Universe (Julie Taymor); Rock Paper Dead (principal, Tom Holland). Commercials: Ford, Tropicana (OCP); AT&T (OCP), Target (OCP); Chipotle (OCP), Kay Jewelers (OCP), etc. PSAs: Too numerous to mention. Television: Grey’s Anatomy, Franklin & Bash, The Fosters, Bosch, etc. Thanks and praise to the Creator!

ROCIO LÓPEZ (Elena Torres, understudy for Delia Barrios/Lupe Reynul) New York: Sonia Flew (The Players Theatre), Brave Ducks (Off Fringe Fest), Song of Solomon (Galsago Productions), Los Angeles: La Ktima (UCLA Freud Playhouse), ChicaBaRenta (Creating Arts Company), Orange Is The New Musical (LATC). Film: The Heat, Ana Music: Hank Lane Orquestras, Loisaidas Mucha Bachata, SHE (pop girl group). BA UCLA, MA NYU. So grateful to be a Teaching Artist for Center Theatre Group and beyond excited to be a part of this production of Zoot Suit. Mad flawing love to my friends and familia for believing in me and standing with me on this artistic journey. So excited to be launching KidzLa this year—a performing arts company for kids. KidzLa.com. Follow the adventures on IG @iheartRocio. Pues Órale!

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TOM M. McHAPOH (Prest is honored to make his Center Theatre Group Mark Taper Forum debut in Zoot Suit. Other L.A. theatre: Sunset Boulevard, Disney’s Beauty and the Beast, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum (Musical Theatre West), Dann Yankeees, Kiss Me, Kate, Peter Pan (Cabrillo Music Theatre), Serrano The Musical (Matrix Theatre), Promises, Promises (Musical Theatre Guild), Bronies: The Musical (Third Street Theatre). TV: How to Get Away with Murder, Scandal, Weeds, Rock, Bad Judge, Sam & Cat, I Didn’t Do It, Ringer, and History of the World…For Now.

MICHAEL NAYDOE PINEDO (Ragman/Cub Reporter/Sailor, understudy for Rafas/ Marine/Joey Castro/Segeant Smith/Bailiff/ Bosur’s Mate). As a professional dancer and actor, Pinedo has been part of several performing companies, music videos, national commercials for brands such as Apple, and has danced alongside James Corden on The Late Late Show Carpool Karaoke Primetime Special. He has also been on the creative side of the industry with his production team Boogiezone. They have successfully created award shows such as Speakeasy 360°, Dystopia, and Zirkus! On top of all this, he is a nationwide traveling hip hop instructor who strives to create movement to enrich many local youth programs. Pinedo is a proud Mexican who is blessed to get the opportunity to be a part of a substance filled show such as Zoot Suit.

ANDRES ORTIZ (Rudy Reynul). South Bay Valley of the Heart (El Teatro Campesino/ San Jose Stage) and Viva La Causa among others (El Teatro Campesino). Dallas Fort Worth: Animals Out of Paper (Amphibian Stage Productions), Titus Andronicus (Kitchen Dog Theatre), In the Beginning (Dallas Theatre Center), The NeverEnding Story (Dallas Children’s Theatre).

ROSE PORTILLO (Dolores Reyna, Center Theatre Group. Zoot Suit (Della), The Wood Demon, The Taveler, Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner, The Day You’ll Love Me, L.A. (About… Productions): Properties of Silence, Evangeline, the Queen of Make-Believe, They Shoot Mexicans, Don’t They?, Memory Rites, Vox, Bleeding Through, Correct Posture of a True Revolutionary, L.A. Real, Know Your Place. Regional: Death and the Maiden (San Diego Rep); The Granny (The Old Globe), Man of the Flesh (South Coast Rep); Spinning into Dust (director), Maria, Maria, Maria, Other People’s Money, Cyrano, One Hundred Years of Solitude (Moldied Blood Theatre). Broadway. Zoot Suit, NY Public. L.A. Real. Film: … and the earth did not swallow him, Zoot Suit, Mean Season, Where the Buffalo Roam, The Heretic/Exorcist II. Playwrights’ Arena Lee Melville Award for Outstanding Contributions to L.A. Theater. Faculty, Pomona College.

GILBERT SALDIVAR (Raoul/Marine, understudy for Enrique Roynak/Israel ‘Smiley’ Torres, Torres. Targets: Jennifer Lopez Dance Again, Christine Aguilera Stripped and Back to Basics. Film: Shine, Chocolate City and Chocolate City: Vegas, Stamp the Yard, Jennifer Lopez: Dance Again. Television. East Los High seasons two–four, Dexter, The Closer, the Super Bowl, the Olympics, Rhapsody En Dance company. Being a member of the James in her Motivating Excellence Season Two program, Dr. Guerrero continued to entertain to standing ovations months before his guitar was silenced on March 17, 2005 at the age of 88. He was also featured in two national tours in Canciones de Mi Padre and Selena Forever. As an actor, musician, and composer, he has written original music for films and plays, including Zoot Suit and was a producer and driving force behind La Bamba. He has composed three musical “Oratorios” which tell the histories of U.S. cities. Daniel continues a residency with Su Teatro in Denver, CO and is currently working with them on several projects to create original material for 2017. Today, Daniel celebrates 50 years in the co-founding of El Teatro Campesino with his brother Luis.

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GILBERT SALDIVAR (Raoul/Marine, understudy for Enrique Roynak/Israel ‘Smiley’ Torres, Torres. Targets: Jennifer Lopez Dance Again, Christine Aguilera Stripped and Back to Basics. Film: Shine, Chocolate City and Chocolate City: Vegas, Stamp the Yard, Jennifer Lopez: Dance Again. Television. East Los High seasons two–four, Dexter, The Closer, the Super Bowl, the Olympics, Rhapsody En Dance company. Being a member of the James in her Motivating Excellence Season Two program, Dr. Guerrero continued to entertain to standing ovations months before his guitar was silenced on March 17, 2005 at the age of 88. He was also featured in two national tours in Canciones de Mi Padre and Selena Forever. As an actor, musician, and composer, he has written original music for films and plays, including Zoot Suit and was a producer and driving force behind La Bamba. He has composed three musical “Oratorios” which tell the histories of U.S. cities. Daniel continues a residency with Su Teatro in Denver, CO and is currently working with them on several projects to create original material for 2017. Today, Daniel celebrates 50 years in the co-founding of El Teatro Campesino with his brother Luis.

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Dinner. Oregon Shakespeare Festival (Associate Artistic Director, 10 seasons): All the Way, Fingersmith, Head Over Heels, King Lear, A Streetcar Named Desire, Equus, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, and The War, among others. NYC’s Lincoln Center: The Clean House. BAM: Throne of Blood. Other credits include: Culture Clash (seven World premiere productions), American Rep, Berkeley Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, Goodman Theatre, Guthrie, Yard, Denver Center, Kennedy Center, South Coast Rep, Oregon Arts Commission Vice Chair. TCG Board of Directors. Former ensemble member of Cornerstone Theater Company. UC San Diego, MFA, Cal Poly SLO, BA. Para mis paches.

ANN CLOSS-FARLEY (Costume Design) is an award-winning Los Angeles-based designer. Credits include Shanghai Disneyland, Women Laughing Alone With Salad, Hopscootch: A Mobile Opera, The Pee-wee Herman Show (Broadway), Disney’s Toy Story: The Musical, Eric Idle’s What About Dick?, Pride and Prejudice, A Musical, Billy Elliot, The Behavior of Broadus, Discord, The Cunning Little Vixen, Carnage, Rabbit Hole; Broadway Bound, Coney Island Christmas, Around the World in 80 Days, and many more. This project has allowed Closs-Farley to explore a piece of Los Angeles history that has challenged her part in its current narrative and has made her excited about her participation in its future.

PABLO SANTIAGO (Lighting Design) is a lighting designer originally from Chiapas, Mexico who designs for theatre, opera, dance, and gallery work. Santiago found a home in Los Angeles while he worked in the film industry for 15 years before obtaining an MFA in lighting design from UCLA and transitioning into live stage design. He is the winner of the 2017 Richard Sherwood Award. His design in Premeditation 2017 Richard Sherwood Award. His design in PABLO SANTIAGO excitement about her participation in its future.

JESSICA MILLS (Wigs) thrives on variety. A graduate of UNCSCA ’09 in wigs and makeup design, her most recent production was Memely We Roll Along in Beverly Hills, and her next is a custom wigs and makeup for Disney Cruise Lines, Nashville Opera, LA Opera, Opera Coeur D’Alene, wigs and makeup design for Cloud 9 at Antaeus Theatre Company, designing the hair and makeup for the opening video of the Independent Spirit Awards (2015), and a lineup of designers and costume makeup artists for the upcoming project of the Next Generation of PSCA. Mills has also worked in Paris and London, involved in projects involving national and international touring productions including: Zoot Suit (play & movie), La Bamba (the film), La Pastorela (play & film), and The Cisco Kid (NTF Film). She has produced work at the Aratani Japan America Theatre, the Marines’ Memorial Theatre, the Mark Taper Forum, the Winter Garden Theatre, The Old Globe, and numerous small and community based theatres. Esparza currently serves as the Operations Manager of California State University Monterey Bay World Theater and as Board President of the Digital Media Foundation of Salinas, California.


DAVID MURAKAMI (Projection Design) is a projection designer, screenwriter, and film director focused on integrating emerging technologies with traditional stage performance. Past projection designs include Minnesota Opera’s Das Rheingold, Dead Man Walking, Champion, Peter Pan, The Little Prince, Heart of Darkness, and Trouble in Tahiti, along with the American premieres of Anya 17, Heart of Darkness, and the World premiere of Luis Valdez’s Valley of the Heart. His current projects include designing Philip Glass’ Les Enfant Terribles with Opera Parallèle and directing his sixth feature-length film, Morningstar.


ROSALINDA MORALES, PAULINE O’CON, AND CANDIDO CORNEJO, JR. (Costuming) bring together diversified experiences from the theatre, independent, network, and studio casting worlds. Uniting their professional relationships in the agency and management community and utilizing various sources outside of the normal casting search criteria, M-O-C Casting works collaboratively with filmmakers, producers, and directors in creating a cast that showcases the increasingly diverse population of audiences that exists today.

PHILLIP ESPARZA (Executive Producer, El Teatro Campesino) has over 47 years of experience in the performing arts as an actor, technical director, media production specialist, and producer. He is a founding member of El Teatro Campesino. Esparza has also worked in the worlds of television, film, and theatre, directing his sixth feature-length film, Anya 17 premieres of Luis Valdez’s The Strange One and Masha and Spike, Bent, The Truth, Stones in His Pockets, and The Lieutenant of Inishmore. Favorites include the Medieval Times, The Mystery of Love & Sex, The Christians, Bent, What the Butler Saw, Marjorie Prime, Yerma and Sonia and Masha and Spike, The Sunshine Boys, Joe Turner’s Come and Gone, Backbeat, Red, Vigil, Leap of Faith, The Lieutenant of Inishmore, Parade, Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson, Nightingale, all wear bowlers, Flight, Nothing But The Truth, Stories in His Pockets, Topdog/Underdog, and “QED” at Lincoln Center Theater. Other favorites include The Pee-wee Herman Show at Club Nokia, A Long Bridge Over Deep Waters with Cornerstone Theater Company, and Jersey Boys in Las Vegas. Esparza is a graduate of the University of Southern California and the University of Amsterdam. Mom to eight-year-old Liam and four-year-old Iliana.

SUSIE WALSH (Stage Manager). In Los Angeles, Susie has stage managed over 100 shows at theatres such as the Mark Taper Forum, the Ahmanson Theatre, the Geffen, LATC, the Wallis, and the Pasadena Playhouse. Favorites include Leap of Faith, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Waiting for Godot, The Heiress, Flower Drum Song, Living Out, Stuff Happens, Arcadia, The Drawer Chaperone, Minstyr’s, The Price, and Endgame. In New York, Susie stage managed Putting It Together with Carol Burnett.

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MICHIE BLEAIR (Stage Manager) has worked on over 30 productions for Center Theatre Group. Some highlights include The Beauty Queen of Leenane, Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom, The Mystery of Love & Sex, The Christians, Bent, What the Butler Saw, Marjorie Prime, Yerma and Sonia and Masha and Spike, The Sunshine Boys, Joe Turner’s Come and Gone, Backbeat, Red, Vigil, Leap of Faith, The Lieutenant of Inishmore, Parade, Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson, Nightingale, all wear bowlers, Flight, Nothing But The Truth, Stories in His Pockets, Topdog/Underdog, and “QED” at Lincoln Center Theater. Other favorites include The Pee-wee Herman Show at Club Nokia, A Long Bridge Over Deep Waters with Cornerstone Theater Company, and Jersey Boys in Las Vegas. Esparza is a graduate of the University of Southern California and the University of Amsterdam. Mom to eight-year-old Liam and four-year-old Iliana.

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premieres of Julia Cho's *Pockets* and Dael Orlandersmith's *Until The Flood* at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. As a producer at Center Theatre Group, Neel has worked closely with the creative teams of a wide range of plays and musicals. He is a member of The Stage Directors and Choreographers Society and the Directors Guild of America.

**NAUSICIA STERGIOU** (General Manager, Mark Taper Forum and Kirk Douglas Theatre) has worked professionally supporting artists in theatres of all shapes, sizes, and locales including many seasons at Center Theatre Group as General Manager and, previously, as Audience Development Director. She oversees mainstage productions at the Taper and Douglas, as well as new play commissions and developmental productions through Center Theatre Group’s New Play Development. Nausica has taught at USC’s School of Dramatic Arts, and advises and works with local nonprofits including Hollywood Orchard.

**GORDON DAVIDSON** (Founding Artistic Director) led the Taper throughout its first 38 seasons, guiding over 300 productions to its stage and winning countless awards for himself and the theatre—including the Tony Award for theatrical excellence, Mango Jones Award, The Governor’s Award for the Arts, and a Guggenheim fellowship. The Kentucky Cycle and *Angels in America (Part One)* won the Pulitzer in consecutive years and, in 1994, three of the four plays nominated for the Tony Award for Best Play were from the Taper (*Angels in America won*). In 1989, Gordon took over the Ahmanson and, in 2004, he produced the inaugural season in the Kirk Douglas Theatre.
The current revival of Zoot Suit marks both “a major social event in Los Angeles history”—the real events the play is based on—and “a major cultural event”—the 1978 World premiere at the Mark Taper Forum was “the first time a Chicano play had been given a mainstage production anywhere in the country, in the world, even,” explained Michael Ritchie to an audience at the Tom Bradley Room atop City Hall. Ritchie was interviewing Zoot Suit writer/director Luis Valdez and the members of Latino theatre trio Culture Clash (Richard Montoya, Ric Salinas, Herbert Siguenza) for a group of Center Theatre Group supporters. Calling Luis Valdez “both an artist and an activist,” Ritchie asked him to give the audience “a sense of both the arc of the creation of this show—and your own personal path within it.”

“Zoot Suit’s a quintessential Los Angeles play,” said Valdez. “It represents the fabric of this city, the internal strife, the Sturm und Drang of Los Angeles, what forced it to be the city that it is today: human confrontation, but eventually resolution.” He added that for Americans, “cultural expression is your most basic human right, so it is my privilege to be back at the Mark Taper Forum to celebrate the resurgence of Zoot Suit and... of a certain kind of social consciousness in Los Angeles that takes us into the future.”

Ritchie then introduced Culture Clash and their relationship to Valdez. “In some ways, you are inheritors of an art, and you had a mentor as artists and activists,” said Ritchie. “Luis had an influence on your careers, individually and collectively. Had you seen Zoot Suit originally? And where are you seen back at the Mark Taper Forum to celebrate the resurgence of Zoot Suit and... of a certain kind of social consciousness in Los Angeles that takes us into the future.”

Valdez recalled a gathering of fellow Chicano artist-activists at El Teatro Campesino to talk about what they could do to change California. “One of the things that we all agreed on, we realized, was that we’re very angry, we’re very political—we need humor.” The artist, curator, and producer René Yañez went back to San Francisco and staged a comedy concert starring Culture Clash in 1984 as a direct result of that meeting. “We needed to laugh. These guys made us laugh, and it was a tremendous release and a revitalization of the community,” said Valdez.

The connection between art and activism—and having a good time—remains vital to Zoot Suit as well. “The fact is, I’m trying to recapture American history. I’m singing the song of America, and Zoot Suit happens to be one of the most catchy tunes I’ve ever put together,” said Valdez.

Listen to the entire conversation on the Center Theatre Group Podcast at CenterTheatreGroup.org.
In the rehearsal room for

**ZOOT SUIT**

1. The cast of Zoot Suit
2. (l-r) Writer/director Luis Valdez and Center Theatre Group Artistic Director Michael Ritchie.
3. (l-r) Luis Valdez and associate director Kimi Valdez.
5. Cast member/music director Daniel Valdez and cast member Rose Portillo.
6. (l-r) Cast members Oscar Camacho, Melina Portillo, Caleb Foote, and Michael Naydoe Pinedo.

All photos by Craig Schwartz.