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MARK TAPER FORUM
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For immediate release.

**“ZOOT SUIT” OPENS SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2017
AT CENTER THEATRE GROUP/MARK TAPER FORUM**

“I have tried my best to defend what is most precious in our American society – a society now at war against the forces of racial intolerance and totalitarian injustice,”

-- George Shearer, defense attorney for the 38th St. Gang in “Zoot Suit”

Currently in previews, Center Theatre Group’s “Zoot Suit” opens February 12 at the Mark Taper Forum. This legendary play with music will continue through March 19, 2017, (extending one week from the originally announced closing date). Written and directed by **Luis Valdez**, “Zoot Suit” is presented in association with El Teatro Campesino.

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

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) plays 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, 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.

Jeanine Mason, who plays 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.”

Matias Ponce, who plays Henry Reyna, has appeared in Los Angeles, New York and regional theatre productions of such plays as “Handball,” “Short Eyes,” “Faith: Part I of A Mexican Trilogy” and “Dominica: The Fat Ugly Ho.” Film and television credits include “Flight World War II,” “Lie to Me,” “Victorious” and “Rizzoli & Isles,” among many others.

“Theatre has always created an extraordinary connection between artists and audiences,” said Center Theatre Group 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.

Bank of America is the title sponsor for “Zoot Suit.”

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 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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February 6, 2017