

For immediate release

CASTING ANNOUNCED FOR WORLD PREMIERE OF “ALMA”

Los Angeles Native Benjamin Benne’s New Play Will Reopen the Kirk Douglas Theatre After Two Years of Being Dark

Casting has been announced for the world premiere of up-and-coming playwright Benjamin Benne’s new work “**Alma**” coming to Los Angeles at Center Theatre Group’s Kirk Douglas Theatre March 6 through April 3, 2022. Directed by Juliette Carrillo, “Alma” opens March 13, 2022, and is produced in cooperation with American Blues Theater.

The cast of “Alma” features **Sabrina Fest** as daughter Angel and **Cheryl Umaña** as mother Alma. **Bianca Ruiz Brockl** and **Marilyn Camacho** are set as understudies for Angel and Alma. The creative team for the world premiere includes **Tanya Orellana** (scenic design), **Carolyn Mazuca** (costume design), **Lonnie Rafael Alcaraz** (lighting design), **Daniel Corral** (sound design and original music), **Edgar Landa** (fight director). Casting is by **Morales/O’con Casting** and **Miriam Mendoza** is the production stage manager.

The National Endowment of the Arts / Theatre Communications Group Directing Fellowship and the Princess Grace Award recipient **Juliette Carrillo** returns to Center Theatre Group where she directed Octavio Solis’ “Lydia” at the Mark Taper Forum and most recently the CTG Digital Stage production of Luis Alfaro’s “Mojada.” Playwright **Benjamin Benne** is a David Geffen / Yale School of Drama M.F.A. Candidate in Playwriting and is the recipient of Portland Stage’s Clauder Competition Gold Prize (2020), Arizona Theatre Company’s National Latinx Playwriting Award (2019), Kennedy Center/KCACTF Latinx Playwriting Award (2019), American Blues Theater’s Blue Ink Playwriting Award (2019), Chesley/Bumbalo Playwriting Award (2017), Playwrights’ Center’s McKnight Fellowship in Playwriting (2017-18) and Many Voices Fellowship (2016-17). “Alma” marks Benne’s Center Theatre Group debut.

In Benne’s exciting new work, Alma (played by Cheryl Umaña) and her daughter, Angel (Sabrina Fest), have built a lifetime of wishes, one for each of Angel’s 17 years — health, love, carne asada every day and a spot at UC Davis. Now, on the eve of the SAT test, Alma comes home to discover her daughter is out drinking rather than studying her flashcards. As Alma goes into her parenting toolbox, drawing on guilt, nostalgia and an expertly wielded chancla (sandal), we learn that there is more than one person’s future at stake and the mother and daughter’s hopes and goals for each other may not be in as close alignment as they once were.

Tickets for “Alma” are currently on sale and start at \$30. They are available through CenterTheatreGroup.org, Audience Services at (213) 972-4400 or in person at the Center Theatre Group Box Offices (at the Ahmanson Theatre at The Music Center, 135 N. Grand Avenue in Downtown L.A. 90012 or at the Kirk Douglas Theatre at 9820 Washington Blvd. in Culver City 90232).

This production is made possible in part by the City of Culver City and its Cultural Affairs Commission, with support from Sony Pictures Entertainment and the Culver City Arts Foundation.

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation’s preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles’ leading nonprofit theatre company, which, under the leadership of Managing Director / CEO Meghan Pressman and Producing Director Douglas C. Baker, programs seasons at the 736-seat Mark Taper Forum and 1,600 to 2,100-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.

Center Theatre Group requires all guests to wear a mask and provide proof of full vaccination, along with a government or education issued photo ID upon arrival. Per the guidelines set by the CDC, “full vaccination” means that at least 14 days have passed since receiving the second dose of an FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine. Booster shots are required for anyone who is eligible. Unvaccinated guests, including children or those with a medical or religious reason, must provide proof of a negative PCR COVID-19 test taken no more than 48 hours prior to attending an indoor performance, or a negative rapid antigen test taken no more than 24 hours prior to attending an indoor performance.

Center Theatre Group will continue working closely with The Music Center and L.A. County officials to ensure they are following all applicable health and safety protocols. More information regarding safety updates as well as audience vaccination, testing and mask requirements is available at CenterTheatreGroup.org/Safety.

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February 25, 2022

BIOS

Sabrina Fest (*Angel, she/her/hers*) is a 25-year-old triple threat. Along with four years of formal training at the University of Southern California’s School of Dramatic Arts, she has studied classical piano for 12 years, and has also been dancing for 20 years with 12 years of ballet training, 10 years of traditional Chinese dance, and five years of competitive Latin Salsa. With a vocal range of E3 to C6, Ms. Fest has sung principal roles such as Sarah Brown in “Guys and Dolls” and Cosette in “Les Miserables” as well as ensemble roles in “Grease,” “The Wild Party” and Helga in “Cabaret.” Ms. Fest has been featured in multiple voice-over ventures, including commercials for McDonald’s, guest starring as Meli Ramos on Nickelodeon’s “The Loud House,” Neonlicious in the OMG Dolls franchise “LOL Surprise” and more. She is represented by CESD and Symington Talent Management.

Cheryl Umaña (*Alma, she/her/hers*) is a graduate of the UCLA School of Theatre Film and Television and of the LACC Theatre Academy. She is an L.A. native with strong roots in Guatemala. She has had the pleasure of working with various theatre companies throughout L.A. Some of which include The Latino Theatre Company (“Mother of Henry,” “La Virgen”) Company of

Angels (“This Land”), Artists at Play (“In Love and Warcraft”) and Breath of Fire (“Digging up the Dirt”). Most recently, she had the wonderful experience of performing in Luis Alfaro’s “Mojada” at the exquisite Repertory Theatre of St Louis. Cheryl first worked with Center Theatre Group in its wonderful Library Play Reading Series in Boyle Heights as well as in the Community Stories program.

Bianca Ruiz Brockl (*Understudy Angel, she/her/hers*) is a B.F.A. graduate from California Institute of the Arts. Her credits include appearances on the film “TiMER,” the TV show “ER” and various shows on the Disney Channel. Bianca has also performed at the REDCAT Theater and the Walt Disney Concert Hall with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Marilyn Camacho (*Understudy Alma, she/her/hers*) is excited to be back in a theatre and working with Center Theatre Group! Marilyn, a Southside Chicago native, is an actor, director and filmmaker, now happy to call Los Angeles her second home. She has performed on many stages throughout her career, notably, at Steppenwolf Theatre, The Goodman, Victory Gardens, and with UrbanTheater Company (UTC), where she is a founding member and served as former Artistic Director. UTC has produced plays that include “Short Eyes,” “Cuba and His Teddy Bear,” “Brainpeople,” “Water and Power,” “Fucking A” and others. Aside from theatre, Marilyn can be seen on TV in the recent film “Never And Again” and in shows such as: “American Gods,” “Animal Kingdom,” “Chicago Fire,” “Scandal” and many more. Currently, she is developing content with her team at her production company, Caribeña Creatives, where they are dedicated to bringing multicultural stories to screen.

Benjamin Benne (*Playwright, he/him/his*) was born and raised in Los Angeles County and as an adult has lived in the Pacific Northwest, Midwest and now resides on the East Coast, where he is a David Geffen/Yale School of Drama M.F.A. Candidate in Playwriting and represented by Paradigm Talent Agency. He is a current member of the Dorothy Strelsin New American Writers Group at Primary Stages (NYC) and under commission from South Coast Repertory Theatre (Costa Mesa, CA). Scheduled productions in 2022 include Alma at ArtsWest (Seattle, WA) and American Blues Theater (Chicago, IL) and the world premiere of “In His Hands” at Mosaic Theater Company (DC). His artistic journey began by doodling renderings of Noah’s Ark in church and when he wrote (and illustrated) his prize-winning little book “The Tale of the Adventurous Penguins” in 5th grade.

Juliette Carrillo (*Director, she/her/hers*). Juliette has directed critically acclaimed premiere and revival productions in theatres across the country including Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Mark Taper Forum, South Coast Repertory, Yale Repertory, Denver Theater Center, Arena Stage and Seattle Repertory. Her recent world premiere, Carmen Aguirre’s “Anywhere But Here,” was produced in Vancouver, B.C., with current plans to tour internationally. As a member of the Cornerstone Theater ensemble, she has developed work for and with various communities such as the East Salinas farm working community, the addiction and recovery community, the Hindu community and seniors and their caregivers. She is a recipient of several awards, including the prestigious National Endowment of the Arts/Theatre Communications Group Directing Fellowship and the Princess Grace Award. She was also chosen by Sundance Theater Institute to participate in the Sundance/Luma Foundation Theater Directors’ Retreat in Arles, France. She is a Yale

School of Drama graduate and on faculty at University of California, Irvine.