

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM FOR HILARIOUS NEW MUSICAL *KISS MY AZTEC!*

***ACCLAIMED PIECE BY COMEDY LEGEND JOHN LEGUIZAMO OFFERS
“SASSY, ROLLICKING, TAKE-NO-PRISONERS, EQUAL-OPPORTUNITY ENTERTAINMENT”***

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse announces the cast and creative team for its upcoming production of *Kiss My Aztec!*, book by **John Leguizamo** (Playhouse’s Page To Stage productions of *Latin History for Morons* and *Diary of a Madman*) and **Tony Taccone** (*Latin History for Morons*, *Zorro in Hell*), music by **Benjamin Velez**, lyrics by **David Kamp**, **Benjamin Velez** and **John Leguizamo**; based on a screenplay written by **John Leguizamo** and **Stephen Chbosky**; directed by **Tony Taccone**. Produced in association with **Berkeley Repertory Theatre**, *Kiss My Aztec!* will run in the Mandell Weiss Theatre **September 3 – October 13** (press opening: September 8).

The cast features **Angelica Beliard** (Ensemble), **Chad Carstarphen** (El Jaguar Negro/ Reymundo), **KC De La Cruz** (Ensemble), **Zachary Infante** (Fernando/Sebastian), **Yani Marin** (Colombina), **Jesús E. Martínez** (Captain Soldier), **Maria-Christina Oliveras** (Tolima), **Joél Pérez** (Pepe), **Al Rodrigo** (Rodrigo), **Desireé Rodriguez** (Pilar) and **Richard Henry Ruiz** (Pierre Pierrot).

The creative team includes **Maija García**, Choreographer; **David Gardos**, Music Supervisor; **Simon Hale**, Orchestrator; **Clint Ramos** (*Tallest Tree in the Forest*, *Ruined*, *Most Wanted*), Scenic and Costume Designer; **Alexander V. Nichols** (*The Last Tiger in Haiti*), Lighting Designer; **Jessica Paz**, Sound Designer; **Rachel Geier**, Wig Designer; **Wilson Torres**, Additional Percussion Arrangements; **Madeleine Oldham**, Dramaturg; **Amy Potozkin**, CSA and **Tara Rubin Casting – Xavier Rubiano**, CSA, Casting; **Megan McClintock**, Stage Manager.

In the spirit of *Book of Mormon*, *Young Frankenstein* and *Spamalot*, this hysterical new musical could only spring from comedy legend John Leguizamo. In the 16th century, a group of ragtag Aztecs are leading the resistance against the Spanish. Led by a fierce female warrior and a not-so-fierce clown, they mount a scrappy attack — and somehow get entangled with a foppish French “fixer,” the over-heated daughter of the Viceroy and the wannabe pop star nephew of the king of Spain. Will our heroes win the day?

“This fierce new musical by Playhouse favourite John Leguizamo boasts a terrific cast and creative team, who imbue his deeply-irreverent, outrageously funny piece about the Aztec resistance to the Spanish conquistadores with incredible gusto,” said **Christopher Ashley**, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse.

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Kiss My Aztec! has received rave reviews in Berkeley: "A vibrant production that has...a cheeky political surface and subtle historic depth," wrote the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The *San Jose Mercury News* called it an "outrageously snarky lampoon of the colonial impulse... the score keeps this picaresque romp grooving along with its intoxicating blend of Afro-Latino sounds from reggaeton and salsa to gospel," while the *San Francisco Examiner* dubbed the show a "sassy, rollicking, take-no-prisoners, equal-opportunity entertainment."

Multifaceted performer, Tony and Emmy Award winner **John Leguizamo's** notable career defies categorization. His work spans the genres of film, theatre, television, literature and beyond. As writer and performer, Leguizamo created the off-Broadway sensation *Mambo Mouth* (1991; Obie, Outer Critics Circle, Vanguardia Awards). His next one-man show, *Spic O-Rama* (1993), enjoyed extended sold-out runs in Chicago and New York (Dramatists' Guild Hull-Warriner Award for Best American Play, Lucille Lortel Outstanding Achievement Award for Best Broadway Performance, Drama Desk Award for Best Solo Performance). His third solo show, *Freak*, completed a successful run on Broadway in 1998. A special presentation of *Freak*, directed by Spike Lee, aired on HBO (Emmy Award for Outstanding Performance in a Variety or Music Program and nomination for Outstanding Variety, Music or Comedy Special). In 2001 he returned to Broadway with *Sexaholix...a Love Story*, directed by Peter Askin (Outer Critics Circle Award nomination for Outstanding Solo Performance and Tony Award nomination for Best Special Theatrical Performance). *Sexaholix* aired as an HBO Special in 2002 and toured widely. His one-man show, *Ghetto Klown*, was developed at La Jolla Playhouse (and developed at Berkeley Rep as *Klass Klown*) and went on to a Broadway run in 2011. His graphic novel *Ghetto Klown* has been nominated for a 2016 Eisner Award. In 2016, Mr. Leguizamo's *Latin History for Morons* (directed by Tony Taccone) was developed as part of La Jolla Playhouse's Page To Stage program and had its world premiere at Berkeley Rep. The show was nominated for two Tony Awards in 2018 with John being the recipient of a special award for his career.

After more than 30 years at Berkeley Rep, **Tony Taccone** celebrated his final season with the company. During his tenure as artistic director, the Tony Award-winning nonprofit has earned a reputation as an international leader in innovative theatre, presenting more than 70 world, American and West Coast premieres and sending 24 shows to New York, two to London and one to Hong Kong. He has staged more than 40 plays in Berkeley, including new work from Julia Cho, John Leguizamo, Daniel Handler, Culture Clash, Rinde Eckert, David Edgar, Danny Hoch, Geoff Hoyle and Itamar Moses. He directed the shows that transferred to London, *Continental Divide* and *Tiny Kushner*, and three that landed on Broadway: *Bridge & Tunnel*, *Wishful Drinking* and *Latin History for Morons*. Prior to Berkeley Rep, Taccone served as artistic director of Eureka Theatre, which produced the American premieres of plays by Dario Fo, Caryl Churchill and David Edgar before focusing on a new generation of American writers. While at the Eureka, he commissioned Tony Kushner's legendary *Angels in America* and co-directed its world premiere. He has collaborated with Kushner on eight plays at Berkeley Rep, including *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures*. His regional credits include Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arena Stage, Center Theatre Group, Guthrie Theater, Huntington Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, OSF, The Public Theater and Seattle Repertory Theatre. As a playwright, he debuted *Ghost Light*, *Rita Moreno: Life Without Makeup*, *Game On*, written with Dan Hoyle, and *It Can't Happen Here*, written with Bennett S. Cohen. In 2012, Taccone received the Margo Jones Award for "demonstrating a significant impact, understanding, and affirmation of playwriting, with a commitment to the living theatre." Most recently, he directed the revival of *Angels in America* at Berkeley Rep.

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David Kamp is an author, journalist, and humorist. Among his books are the national bestseller *The United States of Arugula*, a chronicle of America's foodways; *I Must Say*, Martin Short's best-selling memoir (as co-author); and four volumes of humor. A longtime contributor to *Vanity Fair*, he has profiled such figures as Johnny Cash, Sly Stone, Lucian Freud, Bruce Springsteen, Randy Newman, and the Brill Building songwriters. His work also appears regularly in the *New York Times*. He began his career at *Spy*, the legendary satirical monthly. *Kiss My Aztec!* is his first musical.

Born and raised in Miami, **Benjamin Velez** is a composer/lyricist and Columbia graduate where he wrote the 114th Annual Varsity Show. He's been a proud member of the BMI workshop since 2010 (Harrington Award in 2012). His work has been developed at the Yale Institute for Music Theatre, Musical Theatre Factory, Ars Nova, New York Musical Theatre Festival, The Civilians, 4@15, Joe's Pub, the York Theatre (*Afterland*), Dixon Place (*Starblasters*) and The Public Theater. He was a 2017 Sundance Artist at the Ucross Foundation, and a 2018 artist in residence. Velez's musical *Borderline* was the 2018 Weston Playhouse New Musical Award winner and was workshopped at the 2019 O'Neill National Music Theater Conference. He is a 2018–19 Dramatist Guild Foundation Fellow.

La Jolla Playhouse is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what's new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer, the Playhouse is currently led by Tony Award winner Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, and Managing Director Debby Buchholz. The Playhouse is internationally renowned for the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 102 world premieres, commissioning 52 new works, and sending 32 productions to Broadway – including the currently-running hit musical *Come From Away* – garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. LaJollaPlayhouse.org.

Berkeley Repertory Theatre has grown from a storefront stage to an international leader in innovative theatre. Known for its ambition, relevance, and excellence, as well as its adventurous audience, the nonprofit has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists since 1968. Over 5.5 million people have enjoyed nearly 500 shows at Berkeley Rep, which have gone on to win six Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, one Grammy Award, one Pulitzer Prize, and many other honors. Berkeley Rep received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. Berkeley Rep's bustling facilities—which also include the 400-seat Peet's Theatre, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, and a spacious campus in West Berkeley—are helping revitalize a renowned city. The original production of *Kiss My Aztec!* was made possible by a generous grant from The Roy Cockrum Foundation. berkeleyrep.org.

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FACT SHEET

WHAT: *Kiss My Aztec!*
Book by John Leguizamo and Tony Taccone
Music by Benjamin Velez
Lyrics by David Kamp, Benjamin Velez and John Leguizamo
Based on a screenplay written by John Leguizamo and Stephen Chbosky
Produced in association with Berkeley Repertory Theatre

WHEN: **September 3 – October 13** (Press Opening: Sunday, September 8 at 7:00pm)
Tue/Wed at 7:30pm; Thu/Fri/Sat at 8pm; Sun at 7pm; Sat/Sun at 2pm

WHERE: **Mandell Weiss Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse**
2910 La Jolla Village Drive, La Jolla, CA 92037

WHO: Director: Tony Taccone
Choreographer: Maija García
Music Supervisor: David Gardos
Orchestrator: Simon Hale
Scenic and Costume Designer: Clint Ramos
Lighting Designer: Alexander V. Nichols
Sound Designer: Jessica Paz
Rachel Geier: Wig Designer
Dramaturg: Madeleine Oldham
Casting: Amy Potozkin, CSA; Tara Rubin Casting – Xavier Rubiano, CSA
Stage Manager: Megan McClintock

Cast:	Angelica Beliard	<i>Ensemble</i>
	Chad Carstarphen	<i>El Jaguar Negro/Reymundo</i>
	KC De La Cruz	<i>Ensemble</i>
	Zachary Infante	<i>Fernando/Sebastian</i>
	Yani Marin	<i>Colombina</i>
	Jesús E. Martínez	<i>Captain Soldier</i>
	Maria-Christina Oliveras	<i>Tolima</i>
	Joél Pérez	<i>Pepe</i>
	Al Rodrigo	<i>Rodrigo</i>
	Desireé Rodriguez	<i>Pilar</i>
	Richard Henry Ruiz	<i>Pierre Pierrot</i>

BACKGROUND:

In the spirit of *Book of Mormon*, *Young Frankenstein* and *Spamalot*, this hysterical new musical could only spring from comedy legend John Leguizamo. In the 16th century, a group of ragtag Aztecs are leading the resistance against the Spanish. Led by a fierce female warrior and a not-so-fierce clown, they mount a scrappy attack — and somehow get entangled with a foppish French “fixer,” the over-heated daughter of the Viceroy and the wannabe pop star nephew of the king of Spain. Will our heroes win the day?

TICKETS: (858) 550-1010; LaJollaPlayhouse.org

SPONSOR: Una K. Davis

DINING: Complete your evening by making a reservation at our onsite restaurant James' Place, just steps away from the theatre. Click [HERE](#) for reservations.

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