

Portland Center Stage at

THE ARMORY

NATIVE GARDENS

Written by Karen Zacarías

Directed by Melissa Crespo

May 18 – June 16, 2019

On the U.S. Bank Main Stage

Artistic Director | Marissa Wolf

Managing Director | Cynthia Fuhrman

NATIVE GARDENS

Written by Karen Zacarías

Directed by Melissa Crespo

Scenic Designer

Shoko Kambara

Costume Designer

Lux Haac

Lightning Designer

Dawn Chiang

Sound
Designer/Original

Compositions

Elisheba Ittoop

Stage Manager

Kristen Mun*

Production

Assistants

Alexis Ellis-Alvarez

Molly Shevaun Reed

Casting

Harriet Bass

Will Cotter

Chip Miller

Performed with one intermission.

Presented in association with Syracuse Stage and Geva Theatre Center.

Native Gardens was commissioned and first produced by Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park under Blake Robison (Artistic Director) and Buzz Ward (Managing Director).

Native Gardens is produced by special arrangement with The Gersh Agency, 41 Madison Avenue, 33rd Floor, New York, NY 10010.

Videotaping or other photo or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

If you photograph the set before or after the performance, please credit the designers if you share the image.

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CAST

Anne-Marie Cusson*	Virginia Butley
Paul DeBoy*	Frank Butley
Erick González*	Pablo Del Valle
Monica Rae Summers Gonzalez*	Tania Del Valle
Anthony Green	Gardener
Martin Hernandez	Gardener
Crystal Ann Muñoz	Gardener
Lucas Salazar	Gardener

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FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MARISSA WOLF

Dear friends,

Welcome to a wonderful, bright spring at The Armory! Our final shows in the 2018–2019 season are rich, buoyant offerings that will leave you laughing and leaning forward on the edge of your seats.

The Breath of Life by David Hare offers a gorgeous, intimate day and-a-half with two women who wrestle with dogged memories of a shared past. Our superstar team of Gretchen Corbett and Julia Brothers, directed by beloved JAW regular Ken Rus Schmoll, crack open this play with sharp humor and incredible depth.

Bringing another burst of playful humor to the stage, *Native Gardens* by Karen Zacarías offers a wild ride through the sociopolitical world of the U.S. and Mexico border, with a tongue-in-cheek look at two

couples who share a garden wall. Directed by the incomparable Melissa Crespo, the play unearths powerful, human truths with a dazzling comedic style.

Finally, buckle up for the special event of the season as Storm Large takes the stage in her limited-run performance of *Crazy Enough*. I've been told that audiences have begged for the return of this glorious, funny, wrenching show since its premiere 10 years ago, and I'm thrilled to welcome this powerhouse performer back to The Armory.

Thank you so much for joining us! We'd love to see you again at the theater next season.

Enjoy the show!

Sincerely,

Marisa Wolf

PLANTING SEEDS OF DISSENT AND HOPE

AN INTERVIEW WITH *NATIVE GARDENS* PLAYWRIGHT KAREN ZACARÍAS

By Kelundra Smith

Playwright Karen Zacarías was under a tight deadline to deliver on a new play commission, and though ideas fluttered through her mind, nothing quite stuck. Then, while she was at a dinner party, friends suggested that she write a play about a dispute they were having with their neighbor. After other party attendees started sharing their stories of neighborly nuisances, Zacarías realized that most conflicts in the world could be

boiled down to differences over property, taste, class, and culture. This planted the seeds for her comedy Native Gardens, which finds two couples, one white and one Latinx, at odds over property lines and best practices in gardening.

You've written a few plays that deal with the foibles of suburban life. For example, *The Book Club Play* pokes fun at suburban academic types. Where does that come from for you?

Well here, I was very interested in having my Latinx characters be characters that you don't see a lot onstage. You don't usually get to have a Ph.D. candidate or a lawyer who's Latinx. For me, *Native Gardens* is always about, in a warm-hearted sense, undermining expectations — so the engineer in the play is a woman. We've seen this dynamic before, but there are different ways to approach it, so as the audience is laughing, they're also being challenged.

In this comedy, these neighbors take their stakes — winning a gardening competition and making partner at a law firm — so seriously. But neither seems to have regard for how they're impacting the natural life around them or each other's lives.

People are constantly making judgments, and sometimes they don't go on the generous side — they're assuming the worst of someone. The play ended up becoming a symbol of what's going on in our country, a way to be able to talk about important topics like entitlement, white privilege, and the border through the lens of horticulture and make it funny. It's been a really interesting sociological experiment to see what this play does to audiences across the country. Most communities can relate to what's going on no matter what side of the fence they're on.

You write in the play that the difference between a weed and a flower is judgment. What is America's weed and flower to you?

The idea that immigrants, who are the bedrock of this country, become the scapegoat for every single problem going on. This country goes through phases like that, like with the Irish, the Germans, and the Italians, but you'd think we would learn. This country's ability to reinvent itself and diversity are what makes it beautiful. It's a country founded on ideas, and the idea that we are made up of many tribes and colors of people is what makes us beautiful.

At the time of this interview, the government is shut down over a wall at the Mexican border, but you wrote this play before many people saw this coming. Did you imagine the play would be this relevant?

As a Mexican immigrant in this country, I can tell you that the anti-Mexican sentiment that President Trump has used as the bedrock of his policy was already there before the winds started shifting. That it would literally start to become a conversation about a wall — or a fence — I just happened to choose a symbol that became the symbol for what we're all talking about right now. The roots existed long before the election, and I think that's why people can identify with it. I thought it was really important that all four people have redeeming values, so that you want them to resolve it. I was much more interested in exploring hope.

What do you want audiences to take away from the experience of seeing this show?

You go in, and you're judging each couple and changing your mind about who's right, but at the end of the play, the person you're judging is yourself. My hope is that people will take a moment to ponder what it will take for them to be a better neighbor. I want simple things out of my plays. You can still laugh, have fun, and talk about hard things in a way where nobody's off the hook.

Kelundra Smith is an arts journalist based in Atlanta, whose mission is to connect people to cultural experiences and each other.

THE CAST

Anne-Marie Cusson, Virginia Butley

Portland Center Stage at The Armory debut. Broadway: *Magic/Bird* (understudy). Off-Broadway: *Stalking the Bogeyman; Echoes of the War; Far and Wide*. Regional: *Equus, Collected Stories* (Palm Beach Dramaworks); *Good People, Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike, Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (Asolo Repertory Theatre); *All My Sons* (Delaware Theatre Company); *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Virginia Stage Company); *Arms and the Man* (The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey); *The Clean House* (Geva Theatre Center); *Defying Gravity* (Merrimack Repertory Theatre); *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (New Repertory Theatre); *Romeo and Juliet, The Count of Monte Cristo* (Alabama Shakespeare Festival). National Tour: *Steel Magnolias*. Film: *The Good Shepherd; My Dead Boyfriend; A Nice Girl Like You*; several indie films. TV: *Veep; Law & Order: Special Victims Unit; As The World Turns*.

Paul DeBoy, Frank Butley

Portland Center Stage at The Armory debut. Broadway: *Mamma Mia!* (Broadhurst), *Sight Unseen* (Manhattan Theatre Club, cover). Tours: *Mamma Mia!*, North America; *Martin Luther on Trial*, Fellowship for Performing Arts. Regional: *Native Gardens* (Geva Theatre Center); *The Christians* (Syracuse Stage/The Wilma Theater); *Appoggiatura* (Indiana Repertory Theatre); *All The Way* (DCPA Theatre Company); *Everything is Wonderful, We Will Not Be Silent* (Contemporary American Theater Festival); *The 39 Steps, The Pillowman*, and 15 others (The Repertory Theatre St. Louis); *My Fair Lady, The Real Thing* (Pioneer Theatre Company); *Sylvia, The Clean House, The Caine Mutiny* (Cincinnati Playhouse); *Blithe Spirit* (Olney Theatre Center). Film/TV: All four *Law &*

Orders, The Blacklist: Redemption, Royal Pains, The Following, A Dirty Shame. @pauladeboy

Erick González, Pablo Del Valle

Portland Center Stage at The Armory debut. New York: *El Coronel No Tiene Quien Le Escriba; Valor, Agravio y Mujer; En el Nombre de Salomé, El Loco por Fuerza, Aire Frio* (Repertorio Español). Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Iachimo in *Cymbeline* (Frog and Peach Theatre Company). Angelo in *Measure for Measure*, Don Pedro in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Marc Antony in *Julius Caesar*, Orlando in *As You Like It* (Hip to Hip Theatre Company). *Marfa Lights* (INTAR Theater), *Noche Tan Linda* (Pregones/PRTT), *Farragut North* (Premiere Stages). TV: *Madam Secretary, StartUp*. Film: *A Nice Girl Like You*. Proud member of the Upstart Creatures. erickgonzalezactor.com

Monica Rae Summers Gonzalez, Tania Del Valle

Portland Center Stage at The Armory debut. Monica hails from New York and received her B.F.A. in acting from the Conservatory of Theatre Arts in the School of the Arts at Purchase College, State University of New York. TV: *Orange Is the New Black* and *Shades of Blue*. Off-Broadway: *The Siblings Play* (Cherry Lane Theatre). Regional: *Scapino* (Gulfshore Playhouse). Other New York credits include *Ten Days in a Mad-House* (Strangemen Theatre Company), *Antigone* (The Tank), *Cost/ Benefit* (F*IT Club), and *Tally Ho!*, or *Navigating the Future* (Theater for the New City). Many thanks to HCKR Agency, Cathy Kanner, Harriet Bass Casting, and her phenomenal family and friends. @_monicarae_

Anthony Green, Gardener

Tony holds a B.F.A. in acting and a Master of Theatre Studies in Production and Design from Southern Oregon University. Most recently,

he was seen in the role of Leonte in *The Island in Winter, or La Isla en Invierno* at Bag&Baggage Productions. Tony won the 2018 OTAS Best Supporting Actor Award for his portrayal of Bob Ewell in Lakewood Theatre Company's production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Other Portland credits include *Lydia, Into the Beautiful North, American Night: The Ballad of Juan José, ¡O Romeo!, How The Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, and *Oedipus el Rey* (Milagro Theatre); *The Crackwalker* (Sowelu Theatre); *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue* (Profile Theatre); *Hir* (Defunkt Theatre); *Davita's Harp* (Jewish Theatre Collaborative); and *King Lear, King John*, and *Mary Stuart* at Northwest Classical Theatre Collaborative.

Martin Hernandez, Gardener

Martin is excited to be making his debut at Portland Center Stage at The Armory! Previous Portland theater credits include his Drammy-nominated portrayal of Seth in *John Hughes High: The 1980s Teen Musical* with Staged!, Wilbur in *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: The Rock Musical* at Oregon Children's Theatre, and several mainstage productions at Northwest Children's Theater. Martin thanks Clara, Chip, and Will for this opportunity, and his family for their endless love and support.

Crystal Ann Muñoz, Gardener

Crystal is honored to make her Portland Center Stage at The Armory debut. Hailing from Oregon, Crystal is a two-time Drammy Award winner whose Portland credits include *The Importance of Being Earnest, A Civil War Christmas* (Artists Repertory Theatre), Olivia in *Twelfth Night* (Portland Shakespeare Project), *Water by the Spoonful, The Happiest Song Plays Last, Orlando, Eyes for Consuela* (Profile Theatre), *The Huntsmen* (Portland Playhouse), *Guapa* (Milagro Theatre), *A Pigeon and a Boy* (Jewish Theatre Collaborative), *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (triangle productions!) and *In the Heights* (Stumptown Stages). In her spare time, Crystal enjoys reading scary novels and playing tag with her dog Diego.

Lucas Salazar, *Gardener*

After six years bouncing around Asia, Lucas is thrilled to finally have a city as beautiful as Portland to call home! In a former life, Lucas studied theater at the University of Iowa, acted and composed music with small theaters in Los Angeles, trained with Blue Man Group, and stilt-walked along with anyone who would have him. More recently, he's been traveling abroad, writing children's music, and creating educational programs for ESL learners in China and Taiwan. All the available creative energies have taken him on a path he'd have never foreseen, but he's beyond grateful that it has lead him to being invited to perform at Portland Center Stage at The Armory! Many thanks to everyone involved. Here's to the road ahead.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Karen Zacarías, *Playwright*

Karen Zacarías was recently named by *American Theatre Magazine* as one of the 10 most-produced playwrights in the United States. Her award-winning plays include *The Copper Children*, *Destiny of Desire*, *Native Gardens*, *The Book Club Play*, *Legacy of Light*, *Mariela in the Desert*, *The Sins of Sor Juana*, and the adaptations of *Just Like Us*, *Into the Beautiful North*, and *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent*. She is the author of 10 renowned TYA (Theater for Young Audiences) musicals, including *Ella Enchanted*. She is a core founder of the Latinx Theatre Commons and founder of the award-winning Young Playwrights' Theater. She is an inaugural 2019 Sine Fellow for Policy Innovation at American University and just received the 2019 Lee Reynolds Award. Karen lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband and three children.

karenzacarias.com

Melissa Crespo, Director

Melissa is a New York-based director of theater, opera, and film. Upcoming: world premiere of *Daughters of the Rebellion* by Guadalís del Carmen (Montclair State University) and *Form of a Girl Unknown* by Charly Evon Simpson (Salt Lake Acting Company). Recent: *Wickedest Woman* by Jessica Bashline (Strange Sun Theatre), *Graveyard Shift* by Korde Arrington Tuttle (San Francisco Playhouse), *Brother Toad* by Nathan Louis Jackson (Kansas City Repertory Theatre), *iFigaro! (90210)* by Vid Guerrerio (The Duke on 42nd Street and LA Opera). Her fellowships and residencies include Time Warner Fellow (WP Theatre), Usual Suspect (New York Theatre Workshop), The Director's Project (Drama League), Van Lier Directing Fellow (Second Stage Theatre), and the Allen Lee Hughes Directing Fellow (Arena Stage). melissacrespo.com

Shoko Kambara, Scenic Designer

Musicals: *Little Girl Blue* (world premiere, George Street Playhouse); *Next to Normal* (Syracuse Stage); *Holiday Inn, Always ... Patsy Cline*, and *Guys & Dolls* (Finger Lakes Musical Theatre Festival); *Chicago* (Hangar Theatre); *Nice Work If You Can Get It* (National Tour, Worklight Productions). Plays: *A Christmas Carol, Dégagé* (Hangar Theatre); *Animals Out of Paper* (Hudson Stage Company); *The Turn of the Screw, The Bombitty of Errors* (Syracuse Stage); *Shining City* (Nevada Conservatory Theatre, Las Vegas). Opera: *The Prince of Players* (world premiere, Houston Grand Opera); *The Little Mermaid* (Arkansas Repertory Theatre); *The Barber of Seville* (Opera Philadelphia, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, St Louis Theater Circle Award for Outstanding Set Design, Opera Omaha); *Don Pasquale* (Juilliard School). shokokambara.com

Lux Haac, Costume Designer

Lux is a New York-based costume designer for theater, film, opera, and

dance. Credits include: *Between Two Knees* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *Ajijaak on Turtle Island* (New Victory Theater/Ibex Puppetry); *Well Intentioned White People* (Barrington Stage Company); *iFigaro! (90210)* (The Duke on 42nd Street/ Ragman Ventures); *Destiny of Desire* (The Garden Theatre); *Nibbler* (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater/The Amoralists); *Crossing the Line* (Amphibian Stage Productions); *A Lesson from Aloes* (Juilliard School); *The Road to Damascus* (59E59 Theaters/The Directors Company); *Leave Me Green* (The Gym at Judson); *The Erlkings* (Theatre Row); *Powwow Highway* (HERE/Amerinda). Education: M.F.A. in design for stage and film from Tisch/ NYU. luxhaac.com

Dawn Chiang, *Lighting Designer*

For Portland Center Stage at The Armory, Dawn designed the lighting for *Other Desert Cities* and *The Old Settler*. Her designs for numerous regional theaters include Arena Stage, DCPA Theatre Company, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Arizona Theatre Company, Mark Taper Forum, Guthrie Theater, and Syracuse Stage. On Broadway, Dawn designed the lighting for *Zoot Suit* and was co-designer for *Tango Pasion*. Off-Broadway, she has designed for Roundabout Theater and Manhattan Theatre Club. Dawn was resident lighting designer for New York City Opera, where her designs included *A Little Night Music*. Awards include two Dramalogue Awards, two Syracuse Area Live Theater Awards, and nominations for the American Theatre Wing/Maharam Award, Los Angeles Drama Critics' Award, and San Francisco Bay Area Drama Critics' Award.

Elisheba Ittoop, *Sound Designer/ Original Compositions*

Elisheba's designs and original music have been heard at The Kennedy Center, The Public Theater, American Repertory Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club, MCC Theater, Guthrie Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, Playwrights Horizons, Steppenwolf Theatre, Signature

Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, National Gallery of Art, Soho Rep, Huntington Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, DCPA Theatre Company, Two River Theater, Woolly Mammoth, Ford's Theatre, Folger Theatre, Arena Stage, Alliance Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse, Cleveland Playhouse, Children's Theatre of Charlotte, and Bonnaroo Music Festival. Elisheba was a recipient of the Kenan Fellowship at the Kennedy Center and winner of the 2008 USITT Rising Star Award. She has produced podcasts and written music for NPR, CNN, Audible, WGBH, WFMT/Glimmerglass, and Spotify Bootcamp. Education: NYU, North Carolina School of the Arts. elishebaittoop.com

Kristen Mun, *Stage Manager*

Kristen is originally from the island of Oahu and holds a B.F.A. from Southern Oregon University. She is excited to return for her sixth season at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. Previous credits at The Armory include stage manager for *Until The Flood*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Constellations*, and *Major Barbara*; assistant stage manager for *The Color Purple*, *Fun Home*, and *Astoria: Part Two*; and production assistant on many others. Kristen is also a freelance fight choreographer and teacher. Thank you to Adam and her family for always having her back.

Alexis Ellis-Alvarez, *Production Assistant*

Alexis is thrilled to be working as a stage management apprentice for Portland Center Stage at The Armory. Credits at The Armory include *The Color Purple*, *A Christmas Memory/ Winter Song*, *Buyer and Cellar*, and *Crossing Mnisose*. Outside of Portland, credits include Huntington Theater Company as the production assistant for *Tartuffe*; ArtsEmerson as the assistant stage manager for the world premiere of *Mala*; and Cygnet Theatre as the production assistant for *Animal Crackers*. Alexis studied stage and production management at Emerson College, where she worked on *Antigone Project* as the stage manager and *Guys and Dolls*

as the production assistant. Alexis would like to send love to her parents and sister, who have always been extremely supportive of her.

Molly Shevaun Reed, *Production Assistant*

Molly is thrilled to join Portland Center Stage at The Armory this season as a stage management apprentice, where credits include *Sense and Sensibility*, *Twist Your Dickens*, *Until The Flood*, and *The Color Purple*. Originally from Denton, Texas, Molly has worked in stage management, props design, and has developed new work as a director in Dallas and Portland. Local credits include stage manager for *Spectravagasm X*, director/designer/producer for *Endless Oceans*, and assistant director/production assistant for *The Few* at CoHo Productions. Dallas credits include stage manager for *Dry Land* at Upstart Theater and director/designer for the world premiere of *Nomad Americana* at WaterTower Theatre's Out of the Loop Fringe Festival (formerly titled *Rooting* at Nouveau 47 Theatre). Love and thanks to Cam, Fam, Lyss, and Bear.

Syracuse Stage, *Co-Producer*

Originally constructed as the Regent Movie House in 1914, the physical space of Syracuse Stage has seen many films, musicians, actors, and artists pass through its doors over the course of the past century. The Syracuse Stage that exists today is a nonprofit professional theater company founded in 1974 and a longstanding member of the League of Resident Theatres. Since its inception, Syracuse Stage has produced over 300 shows. It now produces six to seven shows per season, while offering educational programs, pre- and post-show events, and fundraising events each year. As Central New York's only LORT theater company, it is one of the largest performing arts organizations in the area. Syracuse Stage has a strong commitment to giving the community access to a range of high-quality productions; it brings in actors, designers, and directors who are

among the leading theater professionals locally and across the nation.
syracusestage.org

Geva Theatre Center, *Co-Producer*

Now in its 46th season, Geva Theatre Center is a professional theater company dedicated to creating and producing productions, programs, and services of a national standard. As Rochester's flagship theater, Geva is the most attended regional theater in New York State and one of the 25 most subscribed in the country, serving up to 160,000 patrons annually, including 20,000 students. As one of the country's leading theater companies and a member of the League of Resident Theatres, Geva produces a varied contemporary repertoire celebrating the rich tapestry of our diverse community. The theater draws upon the talents of some of the country's top actors, directors, designers, and writers who are shaping the American theater scene. Geva offers a wide variety of educational, outreach, and literary programs, nurturing audiences and artists alike. Since 1995, the organization has been under the artistic direction of Mark Cuddy. gevatheatre.org

THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSOR OF *NATIVE GARDENS*

ARGYLE WINERY: Whether it is a different approach to gardening, or a different approach to life, Argyle Winery celebrates the creativity and diversity that is everywhere — and applauds Portland Center Stage at The Armory for bringing these issues to life each season through outstanding performances in our local community.