



NEWS RELEASE CONTACT:

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Actors' Playhouse Announces Cast and Creative Team for Miami
Premiere of *Sweet Goats & Blueberry Señoritas***

CORAL GABLES, Fla. – October 4, 2023 – Actors' Playhouse is delighted to unveil the complete cast and creative team for the highly anticipated Miami Premiere of ***Sweet Goats & Blueberry Señoritas***, a new Cuban American play by hometown heroes Richard Blanco and Vanessa Garcia. The production will grace the stage of the Miracle Theatre in Coral Gables from November 8 to December 3, 2023.

Richard Blanco, renowned as the poet for Barack Obama's second inauguration, collaborated with fellow Cuban American writer **Vanessa Garcia** to create ***Sweet Goats & Blueberry Señoritas***. The play was commissioned by Maine's Portland Stage, where it premiered last January.

Blanco, recognized as the fifth Presidential Inaugural Poet in U.S. history by President Obama and honored with the National Humanities Medal by President Biden in 2023, also holds the distinction of being the inaugural Poet Laureate of Miami-Dade County. Vanessa Garcia, an established rising star in the world of theater, has gained widespread acclaim for her recent works, including the immersive sensation *The Amparo Experience*, lauded as "Miami's Hottest Ticket" by People en Español. Her other recent plays include *Jenna & The Whale* at Ground Floor Theatre and *#GRACED* at Zoetic Stage, which received a 2023 Carbonell Awards nomination for Outstanding New Work, Play, or Musical for its recent premiere.

Sweet Goats & Blueberry Señoritas takes audiences on a journey from Miami to Maine and back to Miami. It explores the life of Beatriz, a Cuban American baker in Maine, as she grapples with the decision of whether to remain within the close-knit community she's built or to reunite with her estranged mother in Miami. Along the way, Beatriz rediscovers her sense of belonging as she blends the recipes of her childhood with the raw ingredients of her new hometown.

Sweet Goats & Blueberry Señoritas will feature **Melissa Ann Hubicsak** (*The Amparo Experience*, Broadway Factor/BACARDÍ; *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove*, Ronnie Larsen Presents – Carbonell Award nomination) as Beatriz, **JL Rey** (*Sweet Goats & Blueberry Señoritas*, Portland Stage; *Ybor City the Musical*, NY) as Tio Eme, **Conor Walton** (*Bright Star*, Actors' Playhouse; *Pageant*, Island City Stage) as Blake, **Elizabeth Price** (*What the Constitution Means to Me*, City Theatre; *Misery*, Empire Stage) as Georgie, **Michael Gioia** (*Refuge*, Theatre Lab; *Grand Horizons*, Boca Stage) as Maynard, and **Barbara Bonilla** (*El Huracan*, GableStage; *The Savannah Sipping Society*, Empire Stag) as Marilyn.

Directed by Actors' Playhouse Artistic Director **David Arisco**, the creative team for **Sweet Goats & Blueberry Señoritas** includes Scenic Design by **Brandon Newton**, Lighting Design by **Eric Nelson**, Costume Design by **Ellis Tillman**, Sound Design by **Reidar Sorensen**, Technical Direction by **Gene Seyffer**, Production Management by **Carlos Correa**, Set Dressing and Properties Design by **Jodi Dellaventura** and Stage Management by **Amy London**.

This event is made possible with the support of Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, the Cultural Affairs Council, and the Miami Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners for Major Cultural Institutions, and is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, with support of the City of Coral Gables, and the following sponsors: Azamara, BACARDÍ U.S.A., NBC 6 South Florida, Mega TV, Zeta 92.3 and South Florida PBS.

TICKET INFORMATION

Ticket prices range from \$40 to \$85. Tickets can be purchased by calling (305) 444-9293, visiting www.actorsplayhouse.org, or at the Actors' Playhouse Box Office (280 Miracle Mile, Coral Gables, FL 33134). The theatre offers 10 percent off all weekday performances for seniors and \$15 student rush tickets to any performance 15 minutes prior to curtain with identification. Group discounted rates are offered for ten patrons or more through the group sales department at (305) 444-9293 ext. 2 or on www.actorsplayhouse.org.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Preview performances will take place on Wednesday, November 8 and Thursday, November 9 at 8 p.m. The show will open on Friday, November 10 at 8 p.m. and the final performance will take place on Sunday, December 3. Evening performances will be held Wednesday through Saturday at 8 p.m., with matinees on Sundays at 3 p.m. A special weekday matinee will take place on Wednesday, November 15 at 2 p.m.

Keep up with all updates on **Sweet Goats & Blueberry Señoritas** and join the conversation by following Actors' Playhouse on Facebook [@actorsplayhouse](https://www.facebook.com/actorsplayhouse), Instagram [@apmiracletheatre](https://www.instagram.com/apmiracletheatre), YouTube [@actorsplayhousecg](https://www.youtube.com/actorsplayhousecg) and Twitter [@apmiracle](https://twitter.com/apmiracle). #SweetGoatsMiami

About Actors' Playhouse at the Miracle Theatre

Actors' Playhouse is an award-winning nonprofit regional professional theatre company celebrating more than 35 years of artistic excellence. Located in the historic Miracle Theatre on Miracle Mile in downtown Coral Gables, Actors' Playhouse is a Florida Presenting Cultural Organization and one of 13 major cultural institutions in Miami-Dade County. The company produces five Mainstage and four professional Children's Theatre productions annually, a year-

round Theatre Conservatory and Summer Camp Program, educational arts outreach programs, and the Young Talent Big Dreams countywide youth talent contest in partnership with The Children's Trust. To learn more about Actors' Playhouse, visit www.actorsplayhouse.org

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Biographies:

MELISSA ANN HUBICSAK (Beatriz) is a first generation Cuban American Actor and Creatrix with a BFA in performance from FIU. She is honored to bring the words of the incredible Richard Blanco & Vanessa Garcia to life and humbled to be making her Actors' Playhouse debut under the direction of David Arisco in the historic Miracle Theatre. Melissa is best known for her recent Carbonell Award nominated role in *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove* (Ronnie Larsen Presents) and her role as Edna in the hit immersive theatrical piece, *The Amparo Experience* (Broadway Factor/Bacardi). She was last seen in *The Busy Bees Great Adventure* (Adrienne Arsht Center). IG: @Melissa_Ann_Hubicsak

JL Rey (Tio Eme) is thrilled to make his Actors' Playhouse debut. Born in Cuba. Tampa is adopted home. NY Theatre credits include *Ybor City the Musical*, *The Disappearing Man*, *The Boy Cometh to The Mountain*, *The Life of Juanita Castro*, *Kitchenette*, *Ghost Dancer*, *167 Tongues*. Regional Theatre credits include *Miss You Like Hell*, *Sweet Goats and Blueberry Señoritas*, *Christmas Contigo*, *In the Heights*, *Party People*, *The Frogs*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Evita*, *Anna in The Tropics*, *Man Of La Mancha*, *Hamlet*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, & *Romeo and Juliet*. Actor, Singer, & Director. Grateful for a life in the theatre. Peace!

MICHAEL GIOIA (Maynard) is returning to Actors' Playhouse after three decades. Since, he has worked in many South Florida theatres, appearing most recently in *Refuge* at Theatre Lab and *Grand Horizons* at Boca Stage. This summer, he directed NCP's production of *Little Montgomery*. He holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Florida, is a New City Players company member and was the owner and Executive Director of The Acting School of South Florida. Michael would like to thank his family and friends for their encouragement and support. This one's for Ellen. For more info: michaelgioia.com.

ELIZABETH PRICE (Georgie) is an actor, director, and producer based in South Florida. She has her MFA in Acting from Florida Atlantic University, serves as Associate Artistic Director for New City Players, and has received Silver Palm Awards, a Big Easy Award, and Carbonell Award nominations for her acting and directing. Recent roles: Heidi Schreck in City Theatre's *What the Constitution Means to Me* at the Arsht, Annie Wilkes in *Misery* at Empire Stage, President of the Disney Nation in *G7: 2070*. See her as Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* summer 2024 with New City Players.

BARBARA BONILLA (Marilyn) is a Cuban American actor and a native New Yorker, now living in South Florida. She is thrilled to be making her debut at Actors' Playhouse. This past Spring, she starred as Valeria in *El Huracan* at Gable Stage Theatre. And, as Marla Faye Mosely in *The Savannah Sipping Society* at Empire Stage. Off-Broadway: *You've Got Hate Mail*, and *Real Women Have Curves*. Recent Films: *Reminiscence* with Hugh Jackman, and *iMordecai* with Judd Hirsch and Carol Kane. TV: *Unsolved Mysteries*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *The Sopranos* and *The Tonight Show*. This performance is dedicated to Abuela Estela, a professional actress in

Havana, Cuba (1935-1955). She was the family matriarch, whose bravery and self-sacrifice brought us to The United States. Follow @barbarabonillaactor

CONOR WALTON (Blake) is so happy to be back on the stage at Actors' Playhouse. Most recently seen on the main stage in *Bright Star* as Daryl and *Pageant* at Island City Stage. Credits include *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* at Maltz Jupiter Theatre *Memphis*, *Mamma Mia*, Greg 1 in the world premiere musical *Now and Then*. Also, a recent Remy Award winner for contributions to South Florida Theatre. Other regional credits include Hermes in *Rock Odyssey* at The Arsht Center and Zanna in *Zanna-Don't* at Island City Stage. Credits include St. Jimmy in *American Idiot* at Outré Theatre Company. Albert in *It Shoulda Been You* at Actors' Playhouse (Silver Palm Award). *Thalia* in *Xanadu* at Slow Burn theatre and Felix in *The Normal Heart* at Outre Theatre (Carbonell nomination and Silver Palm Award). Other credits include Reggie in *First Date* at Actors' Playhouse (Carbonell nomination and Broadway World award) and the reprise of *Thrill Me* (Broadway World award) at the Broward Center. John Quincy Adams in *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* (Outré theatre) Richard Loeb in *Thrill Me* (Outré Theatre - Broadway World Award) Much love to his husband and fur baby.

RICHARD BLANCO (Playwright) Selected by Barack Obama as the fifth Presidential Inaugural Poet in US history, Richard Blanco was the first Latinx, immigrant, and gay person to serve in that role. In 2023, Blanco was awarded the National Humanities Medal by President Biden. Blanco was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow and has received numerous honorary doctorates. He is the first-ever Poet Laureate of Miami Dade County, as well as first-ever Education Ambassador for the Academy of American Poets. Blanco has taught at Georgetown University, American University, and Wesleyan University, and currently is an associate professor at Florida International University, his alma mater, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering (1991) and a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing (1997). Born in Madrid to Cuban exile parents and raised in Miami in a lower-working-class family, Richard Blanco has navigated cultural identity, sexuality, and sociopolitical matters in his five collections of poetry: *How to Love a Country*; *Looking for The Gulf Motel*, winner of the Paterson Poetry Prize and the Thom Gunn Award; *Directions to The Beach of the Dead*, recipient of the Beyond Margins Award from the PEN American Center; *City of a Hundred Fires*, winner of the Agnes Lynch Starrett Prize; and most recently, *Homeland of My Body*, a volume of new and selected poems. Blanco is also the author of the memoirs *For All of Us, One Today: An Inaugural Poet's Journey* (Beacon Press, 2013) and *The Prince of Los Cocuyos: A Miami Childhood* (Ecco, 2014), winner of a Lambda Literary Award and a Maine Literary Award. Exploring other genres, he is currently a writing co-executive producer for a TV series adapted from his memoir, and a co-lyrist for *Waiting for Snow in Havana*, a musical in development based on Carlos Eire's memoir about *Operation Peter Pan*, a clandestine exodus of over 14,000 unaccompanied Cuban minors to the United States. Blanco's presidential inaugural poem "One Today" was published as a children's book, in collaboration with renowned illustrator Dav Pilkey; and *Boundaries*, a collaboration with photographer Jacob Hessler which challenges the physical and psychological dividing lines that shadow the United States. As a publicly engaged author, Blanco has written occasional poems for organizations and events including the reopening of the US Embassy in Cuba, Freedom to Marry, and the Boston Strong benefit concert following the Boston Marathon bombings, and El Paso shooting. Nationally as well as internationally, Blanco lends his art and voice to advocate for diversity, LGBTQ rights, immigration rights, and arts education. Whether speaking as the Cuban Blanco or the American Richard, the homebody or the world traveler, the shy boy or the openly gay man, the engineer or the presidential inaugural poet, Blanco's writings possess a story-rich quality that illuminates the

human spirit. His work asks those universal questions we all ask ourselves on our own journeys: Where am I from? Where do I belong? Who am I in this world?

VANESSA GARCIA (Playwright) is a Cuban American multidisciplinary writer, screenwriter, playwright, novelist, and journalist/essayist, who has written and worked for *Sesame Street*, where she's been nominated for an Emmy (*Monster Meditation*) and won two Telly Awards (*Tamir on the Street*). She's also worked on *Caillou*; *Behind the Beats* (a French animated show about the history of music and how it's all connected), and other shows. She's the author of the novel *White Light*, which won an International Latino Book Award and was one of NPR's best books of 2015. Her first Picture Book for children, *What the Bread Says*, launched October 1, 2022. Theatrically, she's the author of *The Amparo Experience*, an immersive hit that People en Español called "Miami's Hottest Ticket." Other plays include: *Sweet Goats & Blueberry Señoritas*, which she co-wrote with Obama's Inaugural poet, Richard Blanco; *#Graced* about a woman searching for what it means to be American right now, which premiered at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, and *Jenna & The Whale*, about a town in Florida facing the suicide of a young man, which premiered at Ground Floor Theatre in Austin, Tx in 2023. Her journalism, essays and thought pieces have appeared in The LA Times, The Guardian, The Washington Post, National Review, ESPN, The Hill, Catapult, Narrativel.ly, and numerous other publications. Vanessa also hosts a podcast about family with her own sister and mother called *Never the Empty Nest*, available anywhere you listen to podcasts. She holds a PhD from the University of California Irvine in Creative Nonfiction. Her dissertation focused on Cuba.
www.vanessagarcia.org Instagram: @vanessagarciawriter

DAVID ARISCO (Artistic Director/Director) has been Artistic Director of Actors' Playhouse for 36 years, 29 at the Miracle Theatre. His diverse career spans over 50 years as director, actor, musical director, stage manager, symphonic conductor, and instrumentalist. Recent AP stage acting credits include Edna Turnblad in Actors' Playhouse's production of *Hairspray* and Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Mr. Arisco has directed over 180 shows for Actors' Playhouse, including the recently acclaimed productions of *Proof* and *Bright Star*, and Carbonell-awarded productions of, *In the Heights*, *Les Misérables*, *Aida*, *Floyd Collins*, *Violet*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor® Dreamcoat*, *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, *West Side Story*, and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, all of which won for Best Production of a Musical. Mr. Arisco is the recipient of the George Abbott Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts and the Richard G. Fallon Award for Excellence in Professional Theatre from the Florida Professional Theatre Association. Special thanks to his family and children Kevin, Sean, Katie, and Drew and his seven grandchildren for their love and support.