



NEWS RELEASE

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CHARISE CASTRO SMITH'S *EL HURACÁN* TAKES TOP PRIZE IN ARIZONA THEATRE COMPANY'S 2017 NATIONAL LATINO PLAYWRITING AWARDS

TUCSON, Ariz. (June 2, 2017): *El Huracán*, Charise Castro Smith's heartfelt story of capturing love and loss, is the winner of Arizona Theatre Company's 2017 National Latino Playwriting Award.

Smith, a Miami-based playwright whose previous works include *Feathers and Teeth* and *The Hunchback of Seville*, will receive the \$1,000 top prize.

The 2017 runner-up is Benjamin Benne's *querencia: an imagined autobiography about forbidden fruits*. He will receive \$500. Louis Varela Nevaer's *Fidel* was a finalist.

"*El Huracán* sensitively captures the love and loss of one's loved ones, while still living, and also the loss of oneself," said ATC Playwright in Residence Elaine Romero. "Our judges were impressed with the heart at the core of this text and the humanity and theatricality of its execution."

The story takes place in Miami, on the eve of Hurricane Andrew where three generations of women huddle together to weather the storm. Beset by late-stage Alzheimer's, Valeria, the family matriarch and a former magicienne, wanders between present-day family tensions the siren call of her memories. But, 30 years later, in the

wake of a seemingly unforgivable mistake, the family is faced with the impossible necessity of reconciliation. Inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *El Huracán* is a story about what we carry when we're forced to leave everything behind.

Smith, a playwright, television writer and actor, is currently under commission by South Coast Rep and Trinity Repertory Theatre. Television writing credits include *The Exorcist* (Fox) and *The Death of Eva Sofia Valdez*, an original drama pilot for ABC. Select acting credits include *Antony and Cleopatra* (Royal Shakespeare Company/Public Theater), *An Enemy of the People* (Baltimore Center Stage) and *The Good Wife* (CBS).

In *q u e r e n c i a*: an imagined autobiography about forbidden fruits, Milo's favorite fruit are bananas. Also, he just turned 13 and is grappling with his sexual identity. If that weren't complicated enough, his estranged aunt has just been released from jail and the gym class bully has picked him as the new target. Having never left his neighborhood in L.A., he dreams about what it would be like to escape. In the meantime, at least he has his neighbor, Zoe, who has sworn to be his BFF with a drop of blood. And, in their world, blood is supposed to be the strongest bond.

Benne's plays include a mortality-themed trilogy: *Terra Incognita*, *at the very bottom of a body of water*, and *What \ Washed Ashore / Astray*. His work has been produced and developed with The Lark's Playwrights' Week (NY), Pillsbury House Theatre (MN), Annex Theatre (WA), Forward Flux Productions (WA), Umbrella Project (WA), Parley (WA), and Seattle Repertory Theatre (WA), among others. He has been a finalist for the Princess Grace Award and O'Neill National Playwrights Conference.

Fidel, exiled to Mexico with his brother Raúl and Ernesto "Che" Guervara, plot to overthrow the government of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. What Fidel does not plan, however, is falling in love with Mexican school teacher, Lia Cámara. He must abandon her to wage revolution in Cuba. Months after consolidating power, however, he sends for her. Received as a dignitary, she tours Cuba, and decides to stay, throwing herself into establishing a rural school system to bring literacy and education to millions of Cuban peasants. In short order, however, she begins to have misgivings as the Revolution takes a dark, totalitarian turn. Torn between her love for Fidel, who has asked her to marry him and become the First Lady of Cuba, and her convictions, she

decides to abruptly leave Cuba. Heartbroken, Fidel goes about his Revolution, lashing out with anger and terror against political opponents. But, across the decades, the former lovers remain very much in each other's minds – and hearts – with the last contact place in November 2015.

Previous winners of the National Latino Playwriting Award have been finalists for the Pulitzer Prize, featured at the Humana Festival and at regional theaters across the country. The 2016 winner was Desi Moreno-Penson's *Beige*.

Recent winner *The River Bride* by Marisela Treviño Orta will be produced as part of ATC's 51st Season. Other past recipients include Matthew Paul Olmos, Kristoffer Diaz, Carlos Murillo, Luis Alfaro, Octavio Solis, Raul Garza and Karen Zacarías. Felix Pire's winning play *The Origins of Happiness in Latin* was previously produced by ATC.

The 2017 National Latino Playwriting Award is supported by an Art Works grant from the National Endowment of the Arts as part of the Voices of a New America company-wide initiative.

Submissions for the 2018 National Latino Playwriting Award are now open. Latino playwrights residing in the United States, its territories or Mexico are encouraged to submit scripts for the award. Each script will be read and evaluated by a culturally diverse panel of theatre artists; finalists will be judged by ATC artistic staff.

Submission Procedure

We respectfully ask that you adhere to the following application requirements:

Submit a single script **via U.S. mail and email**. Scripts must be postmarked by December 31, 2017.

Please include a title page on the script that includes the play's title, the author's name, and contact information (including a phone number, mailing address and email).

Include a cover letter of no more than one page, describing the play's developmental history, and how the play fits into the playwright's broader career trajectory.

Submit manuscripts to:

National Latino Playwriting Award
Arizona Theatre Company
343 S. Scott Ave. Tucson, AZ 85701

Eligibility

The award is open to all Latino playwrights currently residing in the United States, its territories, or Mexico.

Scripts may be in English, English and Spanish, or solely in Spanish. (Spanish-language and bilingual scripts must be accompanied by an English translation.)

Plays must be unpublished and professionally unproduced at the time of submission.

Full-length and one-act plays (minimum length: 50 pages) on any subject will be accepted.

Scripts

The physical scripts become the property of Arizona Theatre Company and will not be returned. In this case, "property" means the physical property of the theatre, not the intellectual property or any rights to the play.

The winner will be notified by August 1, 2018.

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Contact:

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About Arizona Theatre Company:

Arizona Theatre Company (ATC) is the preeminent fully professional theatre in the state of Arizona, committed to inspiring, engaging, and entertaining - one moment, one production, and one audience at a time. Boasting the largest seasonal subscriber base in the performing arts in Arizona, ATC is the only resident company in the U.S. that is fully based in two cities providing its wide array of programming and community outreach across the region. Now in its 50th season, more than 130,000 people each year attend our performances at the historic Temple of Music and Art in Tucson, and the elegant Herberger Theater Center in downtown Phoenix. Each season of home-grown productions reflects the rich variety of world drama—from classics to contemporary plays, from musicals to new works—along with a wide array of community outreach programs, educational opportunities, access initiatives and new play programs. Designated The State Theatre of Arizona, ATC is led by Artistic Director David Ira Goldstein and a dedicated Board of Trustees.