



NEWS RELEASE

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ARIZONA THEATRE COMPANY OPENS 2019/2020 SEASON WITH MARCO RAMIREZ' "ORIGINAL AND GRACEFUL" *THE ROYALE*

Arizona Theatre Company (Sean Daniels, Artistic Director; Billy Russo, Managing Director) kicks off the 2019/2020 season, its 53rd, with Marco Ramirez' power-packed boxing drama, ***The Royale***, a deeply theatrical and emotionally moving story loosely based on the life of the world's first African-American heavyweight boxing champion, Jack Johnson, Sept. 7-28 at the Temple of Music & Art in Tucson and Oct. 3-20 at the Herberger Theater Center in Phoenix.

Described as "original and graceful" by *The New York Times*, ***The Royale*** explores one man's struggle while reflecting on a bigger one in the midst of Jim Crow's south in 1910. It's also the story of a brother and his sister who remains his greatest adversary and strongest motivation as he struggles for glory and respect.

And it's a boxing story without a single fist-driven punch being thrown. Even so, "***The Royale*** packs a punch!" *The New York Times* wrote.

Playwright Marco Ramirez, whose plays have been produced at Lincoln Center Theater, The Kennedy Center, The Humana Festival, The Old Globe (San Diego), The Bush Theatre (London) and American Theater Company, among others, also has built both a reputation and a following as a TV writer for hits including Marvel's *Daredevil* (Netflix) *The Defenders* (Netflix), *Sons of Anarchy* (FX) and *Orange is the New Black* (Netflix).

"Marco Ramirez and Michael John Garcés are two of the most exciting artists working in our country today. To have their work, and them, in our space and cities is a great way to start

this next chapter of Arizona Theatre Company,” Daniels said. “This show has won Best New Play in New York, LA, London, and Boston - it’s time for it to come to Arizona and for these two lead artists to begin their long relationship with us. Ten years ago this month, I directed a new play reading at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. by a fresh-out-of-college kid named Marco Ramirez - so it feels like it’s come full circle that we begin our next 10 years here.”

Directed by Garcés, artistic director at the community-engaged ensemble Cornerstone Theater Company in Los Angeles, ***The Royale*** features award-winning actor Bechir Sylvain as Jay, OBIE winner Edward Lee Gibson as Wynton, Roberto Antonio Martin in his ATC debut as Fish, veteran actor Erica Chamblee as Nina and Peter Howard, in his first ATC appearance, as Max.

Garcés is no stranger to Arizona having spent much of the past two years working on *Native Nation*, a new work by Sicangu Lakota playwright Larissa FastHorse that was commissioned by ASU Gammage and presented by Cornerstone Theater Company.

The Royale is also the first of two shows selected by ATC Artistic Director Daniels in his inaugural season that includes ***Silent Sky***, ***Cabaret***, ***“Master Harold” ... and the Boys***, ***The Legend of Georgia McBride*** and ***Women in Jeopardy!***, which Daniels selected and will direct to close the season.

The 2019/2020 season is sponsored by I. Michael and Beth Kasser.

For more information, go to www.arizonatheatre.org or call the box office in Tucson at (520) 622-2823 or in Phoenix at (602) 256-6995.

BIOGRAPHIES

Michael John Garcés (**Director**) is the artistic director of Cornerstone Theater Company, a community-engaged ensemble based in Los Angeles. Projects for the company include directing *Native Nation* and *Urban Rez* by Larissa FastHorse, *What Happens Next* by Naomi Iizuka, California: *The Tempest* by Alison Carey, *Plumas Negras* by Juliette Carrillo and *Café Vida* by Lisa Loomer; and writing *Magic Fruit* and *The Forked Path*. In New York: premieres at Carnegie Hall, Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Cherry Lane, INTAR, Second Stage, The Atlantic Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater and Repertorio Español. Regionally: The Geffen Playhouse, Arizona Theatre Company, Kennedy Center, The Great Plains Theatre Conference, ASUGammage, The La Jolla Playhouse, The Guthrie Theatre, Woolly Mammoth, The Walker Arts Center, The Folger Theatre, Mosaic Theatre, Cleveland Public Theatre, South Coast Rep, Yale Rep, Actors Theatre of Louisville Humana Festival, The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.

Marco Ramirez (**Playwright**) has had plays produced at Lincoln Center Theater, The Kennedy Center, The Humana Festival, The Old Globe (San Diego), The Bush Theatre (London), American Theater Company (Chicago), Soulpepper (Toronto) and Center Theatre Group (LA). Honors include Helen Hayes and Drama Desk nominations, the Outer Critics Circle’s John Gassner Playwriting Award, Juilliard’s Lila Acheson Wallace Playwriting Fellowship, Lincoln

Center's Le Comte du Nouy Award, and TCG's Edgerton Foundation New Play Award. Marco is also a WGA and Emmy Award-nominated TV writer and producer, where his credits include Marvel's *Daredevil* (Netflix) *The Defenders* (Netflix), *Sons of Anarchy* (FX), *Orange is the New Black* (Netflix) and *Fear the Walking Dead* (AMC).

Bechir Sylvain (**JAY**) is a Haitian-American actor who plays "EJ" on the TNT's hit series *Claws*. A lifetime member of The Actors Studio, Bechir studied drama at Southern Methodist University and co-founded Ground Up & Rising Theater Company in Miami where he grew up after immigrating from Haiti as a teenager. Bechir has performed at Arizona Theater Company, Gablestage, American Stage, Summer Shorts, Ground Up & Rising, Gorilla Theater and Theater 68 where he earned a Best Ensemble NAACP Theater Award win for his performance as Malcolm X in the play *The Meeting*. His television credits also include guest starring on *Chicago, PD* (NBC), *Better Call Saul* (AMC), *Black-ish* (ABC) *Grace and Frankie* (Netflix), *Fuller House* (Netflix) and *The Mick* (FOX). He was supporting lead in the Hallmark drama *The Ultimate Life* and had supporting role in American Zeotrope's *Life After Beth*. Fluent in French and Haitian Kreyol, Bechir has appeared in over 32 national and regional commercials. He was the inaugural grand prize winner of the ABC Discovers showcase and has won Best Actor at American Black Film Festival. Next, he can be seen recurring in the BET streaming series *Bigger*.

Edwin Lee Gibson (**WYNTON**) is the recipient of the O.B.I.E. (Off Broadway in Excellence) Award for Outstanding Performance. *The Royale* marks his 104th professional theatre production. Theatre (2017-2019 credits): *Turn Me Loose*, Arena Stage (Washington, D.C.); *Battlefield*, Theatre Des Bouffes du Nord (Paris) & National Theatre Studio (London) and International Tour; *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea*, Lookingglass Theatre Company (Chicago); and *Beyond Caring* - U.S. premiere, Lookingglass Theatre Company (Chicago); Other selected theatre credits: *Love and Information* - U.S. premiere, Minetta Lane Theatre/NYTW (NYC); *The Royale*, American Theatre Company (Chicago); *The Seven*, New York Theatre Workshop (NYC); *The Diary of Black Men*, (London and Birmingham, UK); *Five 'Til*, Dixon Place Theatre (NYC); and *The Death of Bessie Smith*, New Brooklyn Theatre (NYC), TV: *Law and Order: SVU*; *Shameless*, *Chicago P.D.*, and *Proven Innocent*. Film: *The Visitor*; *Marshall*; *Mom and Dad*; *Sweet Tooth*; and *Blood First*.

This is Roberto Antonio Martin's (**FISH**) first production with Arizona Theatre Company. Martin is a Bay Area-native who studied acting at California Institute of the Arts. He is an accomplished musician and martial artist. His past TV roles include: Brian Torres in ABC's *For the People*, and Mauricio in ABC's *Grown -ish*. Past theatre credits include *Riot Rebellion* with the Watts Village Theatre Company and Cornbread in Katori Hall's *Hurt Village*.

Erica Chamblee (**NINA**) - Regional/other theater credits include: *Sooner/Later*, - Mosaic Theater Company DC; *I Killed My Mother*, *Bernadette*, *The Lathe of Heaven* - Heather/Spooky Action Theater; *A Human Being Died that Night*, *Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela & Gospel of Lovingkindness* - Miriam Mosaic Theater Company; *Trojan Women*, *Cherokee* - Traci/Woolley Mammoth Theater Company; *¾ of a Mass for St. Vivian* - Kennedy Center; *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* - Soraya Theater Alliance; *Anna K* - Roundhouse Silver Spring, and *Lioness: Pride of America* - Atlas Intersections Festival. Film Credits: *Lincoln*, *Toe to Toe*, *Jazz in the Diamond District*, *Spit*. TV credits: *House of Cards*, *The Wire*.

Peter Howard (**Max**) is making his ATC debut. As a performer, his regional theatre credits include the Mark Taper Forum, Long Wharf, Yale Rep, Pasadena Playhouse, the Guthrie, South

Coast Repertory and Woolly Mammoth. Peter is a founding member of the Los Angeles-based Cornerstone Theater Company—a leader in the field of community-engaged artmaking—working as an actor, playwright and director in collaboration with dozens of urban and rural communities across the U.S. since 1986. With Cornerstone, he has appeared in world premieres by Luis Alfaro, Sarah Ruhl, Erik Ehn, Naomi Iizuka, Lisa Loomer and Michael John Garcés, among many others. This past spring, Peter appeared in *Native Nation* by Larissa FastHorse, produced in partnership with ASU Gammage and performed at both the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and Steele Indian School Park in Phoenix. Peter is a recipient of a Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellowship. Born and raised in Massachusetts, he currently lives in Los Angeles.

CREATIVE TEAM

Scenic Design: Misha Kachman

Costume Design: Sarita Fellows

Lighting Design: Allen Willner

Sound Design: Brian Jerome Peterson

Boxing Consultant: Michael Gutierrez

Production Stage Manager: Dom Ruggiero

Tickets for *The Royale* start at \$25 and are subject to change depending on time, date and section, and are available at www.arizonatheatre.org or by calling the box office at (520) 622-2823 in Tucson or (602) 256-6995 in Phoenix. Discounts are available. Active Military/Vets/Service/1st Responders receive \$10 off the price of tickets (except Premium.) Students with valid ID, \$15 for all performances. Half-price rush tickets are available for balcony seating for all performances one hour prior to curtain at the ATC box office (subject to availability). **\$15 Community Night** performance in Tucson is Tuesday, Sept. 17 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Oct. 6 at 7 p.m. in Phoenix. (Tickets must be purchased at the Temple of Music and Art or the Herberger Theater Center starting one hour prior to curtain. Tickets are first-come, first served. *Cash preferred*. Two tickets maximum per person.) For discounts for groups of 10 or more, call (520) 884-8210, x7213.

Arizona Theatre Company offers accessibility services for patrons with disabilities for select performances. Audio Description provides patrons with vision loss a running audio description of the movement and activities onstage through an infrared broadcast system. An Audio-Described performance is offered in Tucson on Thursday, Sept. 26 at 2 p.m. and in Phoenix on Saturday, Oct. 19 at 2 p.m. Interested patrons with vision loss may request a tactile tour one hour prior to curtain. **American Sign Language Interpretation** is presented by professional, theatrically trained ASL interpreters for people who have deafness or hearing impairment. An ASL-interpreted performance is offered in Tucson on Thursday Sept. 26 at 7:30 p.m. and in Phoenix on Saturday, Oct. 19 at 2 p.m. **Open Captioning** allows patrons to read the play's dialogue on an LED screen as the play progresses. An open captioned performance is offered in Tucson on Thursday, Sept. 26 at 2 p.m. and in Phoenix on Sunday, Sunday, Oct. 13 at 7 p.m. For open-captioned or ASL-interpreted performances, patrons should request seats best suited to ASL interpretation or captioning when purchasing tickets. Large print and Braille playbills and infrared listening amplification devices are also available at every ATC performance with reservation. TTY access available via Arizona Relay at (800) 367-8939 (TTY/ASCII) for the box office in Tucson at (520) 884-9723, or (602) 256-6995 in Phoenix.

Fact Sheet:

The Royale

By Marco Ramirez

Directed by Michael John Garcés

Tucson Venue:

Temple of Music and Art

330 S. Scott Ave., Tucson

Previews Begin: Saturday, Sept. 7 at 7:30 p.m.

Opening Night: Friday, Sept. 13 at 7:30 p.m.

Closing Performance: Saturday, Sept. 28 at 7:30 p.m.

Phoenix Venue:

Herberger Theater Center

222 E. Monroe St., Phoenix

Previews Begin: Thursday, Oct. 3 at 7:30 p.m.

Opening Night: Saturday, Oct. 5 at 7:30 p.m.

Closing Performance: Sunday, Oct. 20 at 2 p.m.

Ticket prices begin at \$25 and are available in-person at the Temple of Music and Art box office or via phone at (520) 622-2823; or at the Herberger Theater Center box office or by calling (602) 256-6995 in Phoenix. Tickets also can be purchased online at www.arizonatheatre.org.

Contact:

Steve Carr, The Kur Carr Group, Inc., (602) 317-3040

About Arizona Theatre Company: Under new leadership, and now celebrating its 53rd-season, Arizona Theatre Company is truly “The State Theatre.” Our company boasts the largest subscriber base of any performing arts organization in Arizona, with more than 130,000 people each year attending performances at the historic Temple of Music and Art in Tucson, and the elegant Herberger Theater Center in downtown Phoenix.

Each season of high quality productions reflects the rich variety of world theatre – from classic to contemporary plays, from musicals to new works – audiences enjoy the rich emotional experience and joy that can only be captured through live theatre. ATC is the preeminent professional theatre in the state of Arizona. Under the direction of Artistic Director Sean Daniels and Managing Director Billy Russo, ATC operates in two cities – unlike any other League of Resident Theaters (LORT) company in the country.

ATC shares the passion of the theatre through a wide array of outreach programs, educational opportunities, access initiatives, and community events. With more than 700 Education & Engagement activities through the schools and summer programs, ATC focuses on teaching Arizona’s youth about the creative power of dramatic literature and how it can enrich their own lives in multiple ways.

ATC reaches far beyond the metropolitan areas of Tucson and Phoenix, enriching the theatre learning experience for current and future audiences.