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Kory Kelly - Director of Marketing at Pasadena Playhouse:

# ***Native Gardens***

A new comedy by Karen Zacarías

Directed by *Seinfeld's* Jason Alexander

Featuring Christian Barillas (*Modern Family*),

Academy Award nominee Bruce Davison (*Longtime Companion*, *X-Men*), Frances Fisher (*Titanic*), and Jessica Meraz (*Major Crimes*)

**Now through September 30**

PASADENA, CA (September 9, 2018) - Pasadena Playhouse, the State Theater of California, presents ***Native Gardens***, a new comedy by Karen Zacarías and directed by *Seinfeld's* Jason Alexander. The production runs now through September 30.

The cast of ***Native Gardens*** features acclaimed actors of both screen and stage: **Christian Barillas** (Ronaldo on *Modern Family*), Academy Award Nominee **Bruce Davison** (*Willard*, *Longtime Companion*, and *A Song at Twilight* at Pasadena Playhouse), **Frances Fisher** (*Titanic*, *Unforgiven*, *Resurrection*), and **Jessica Meraz** (TNT's *Major Crimes*). The cast of ***Native Gardens*** is rounded out by Julian Armaya, Richard Biglia and Bradley Roa II.

In this new comedy, horticultures clash, turning well-intentioned neighbors into feuding enemies. It's the War of the Hoses where cultures collide and mudslinging ensues - literally. Good fences don't always make good neighbors, but they do make for a lot of laughs in this new play.

***Native Gardens*** tells the story of Pablo (Barillas), a rising attorney, and Tania (Meraz), his very pregnant wife who is also a doctoral candidate. They have just purchased a home next to Frank (Davison) and Virginia (Fisher), a well-established D.C. couple with a prize-worthy English garden. They could not feel more welcomed until an impending barbeque for Pablo's colleagues and a delicate disagreement over a long-standing fence line soon spirals into an all-out comedic border dispute.

Tickets start at \$25 for ***Native Gardens*** and are available at [pasadenaplayhouse.org](http://pasadenaplayhouse.org), by phone at 626-356-7529, and at the box office at 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101.

Mexican-American playwright Karen Zacarías said, "Neighborhood stalwarts Virginia and Frank Butley are overjoyed when Tania and Pablo del Valle move into the "fixer-upper" next door. But a disagreement about a fence...and opposing views about gardening push these well-meaning couples into a battle on the politics of...PLANTS. It's a big-hearted comedy with a lot of sharp little teeth. By focusing on the disarming nature of gardening, I hope we can laugh and examine many thorny issues taking root in our culture."

Ben Demers in *DC Theatre Scene.com* said, "A laugh-a-minute comedy that has arrived at exactly the right time - true breath of fresh comic air. Beyond snappy one-liners and garden hose fights, the play challenges audiences to look beyond petty differences and rediscover our shared decency." Rohan Preston in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* said, "Zacarías' smart

comedy [is] seeded with so many jokes and insights that it's easily this summer's comedy winner."

Director Jason Alexander said, "In a deceptively simple, deeply appealing play the author has captured the essence of a global conversation we are now having. The subject is 'who belongs to what community and who controls those communities.' It sounds like that would have to be a heavy weighted evening, but in Karen Zacarías' deft hands, she has transformed it into a serio-comic delight. It is impossible to watch without getting involved and wondering what you would do in the same situation. Great characters, great fun and I look forward to sharing it with our theater community."

"It is very exciting for me to introduce the work of Karen Zacarías to Los Angeles. She tackles topical issues with great verve, wit and relevance," said Danny Feldman, Pasadena Playhouse Producing Artistic Director. He continues, "Anyone who has a neighbor can relate - or maybe even sympathize - with someone in this story. We all share stories about good and bad neighbors and what can happen. And when it happens to someone else, its even funnier. In the hands of these comedic legends, I am sure you are in for a good laugh."

The creative team is rounded out by scenic designer David Meyer, costume designer Raquel Barreto, lighting designer Tom Ontiveros, and sound designer Christian Lee.

## Calendar Listing for *Native Gardens*

Venue: Pasadena Playhouse, 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101

Dates: Now through September 30

Tuesdays (September 11 and September 25 only) at 8:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings at 8:00 p.m.

Saturday at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m; Sunday at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Tickets Prices start at \$29

Online -- PasadenaPlayhouse.org

Phone -- 626-356-7529

In person -- Pasadena Playhouse Box Office,

Address -- 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101

Information: For more information on all productions at Pasadena Playhouse visit PasadenaPlayhouse.org.

Description: Good fences don't always make good neighbors, but they do make for great comedy in this new play directed by Jason Alexander (*Seinfeld*). An attorney on the rise and his very pregnant wife couldn't feel more welcomed by their new neighbors. But when a friendly disagreement about the lay of the land escalates into a backyard brawl, cultures collide and mudslinging ensues ... literally.

**ABOUT THE PASADENA PLAYHOUSE** -- Pasadena Playhouse is a place where people have gathered for 100 years to experience bold and important theater. It is one of the most prolific theaters in American history with a legacy of profound theatrical impact and courageous new work. In 1937, the Playhouse was officially recognized as the State Theater of California for its contribution and commitment to the dramatic arts. Today it continues that tradition of excellence under the helm of producing artistic director Danny Feldman. Dedicated to enriching lives through theater, community programs and learning initiatives, Pasadena Playhouse is a living force in the community.

### BIOGRAPHIES FOR NATIVE GARDENS

**KAREN ZACARÍAS** -- Award-winning plays include the sold-out/extended comedy *The Book Club Play*, the sold-out world premiere drama *Just Like Us* (adapted from the book by Helen Thorpe) at Denver

Theater Center, the Steinberg-citation award play *Legacy of Light*, the Francesca Primus Award winning play *Mariela in the Desert*, the Helen Hayes Award-winning play *The Sins of Sor Juana*, and the adaptation of Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*. Karen also has a piece in the Arena Stage premiere of *Our War*. Her TYA musicals with composer Debbie Wicks la Puma include *Jane Of The Jungle*, *Einstein Is A Dummy*, *Looking For Roberto Clemente*, *Cinderella Eats Rice And Beans*, *Ferdinand The Bull*, and *Frida Libre*. Her musical *Chasing George Washington* premiered at The Kennedy Center for Performing Arts and went on a National Tour. Her script was then adapted into a book by Scholastic with a foreword by First Lady Michelle Obama.

Karen is currently working on the adaptation of Edith Wharton's *The Age Of Innocence*, a drama for Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and a Brazilian themed Oliver Twist musical: *Oliverio: A Brazilian Twist On Dickens* for the Kennedy Center. Her libretto of *The Sun Also Rises* for the Washington Ballet received accolades in the New York Times and she is currently writing the libretto for *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* with Washington Ballet artistic Director Septime Webre. She is proud to be currently commissioned to write new plays for Arena Stage, Cincinnati Playhouse, Ford's Theater, Adventure Theater, and First Stage.

Her plays have been produced at The John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, Arena Stage, The Goodman Theater, Round House Theater, The Denver Center, Alliance Theater, Imagination Stage, GALA Hispanic Theater, Berkshire Theater Festival, South Coast Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, Cleveland Playhouse, San Jose Repertory Theater, GEVA Theater, Horizon's Theater, People's Light and Theater, Walnut Street Theater, Arden Theater, Milagro Theater, Teatro Vista, Aurora Theater, and many more. Her awards include: New Voices Award, 2010 Steinberg Citation-Best New Play, Paul Aneillo Award, National Francesca Primus Prize, New Voices Award, National Latino Play Award, Finalist Susan Blackburn, Helen Hayes for Outstanding New Play.

Karen is the first playwright-in-residence at Arena Stage in Washington, DC and has taught playwriting at Georgetown University. She is the founder of Young Playwrights' Theater (YPT), an award-winning theater company that teaches playwriting in local public schools in Washington, DC. YPT won the 2010 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award from the White House as one of the most innovative arts programs in the nation. The YPT curriculum is currently being used in public schools in DC, VA, MD, New Orleans, Detroit, and Texas and is published on Amazon as *Write to Dream*. Born in Mexico, Karen now lives in Washington D.C. with her husband and three children.

**JASON ALEXANDER** -- Though best known for his award-winning, nine year stint as the now iconic George Costanza of television's *Seinfeld*, Jason Alexander has achieved international recognition for a career noted for its extraordinary diversity. Aside from his performances on stage, screen and television, he has worked extensively as a writer, composer, director, producer and teacher of acting. In between all that he has also become an award-winning magician, a notorious poker player and a respected advocate on social and political issues.

For his depiction of "George" on *Seinfeld*, Jason garnered six Emmy nominations, four Golden Globe nominations, an American Television Award and two American Comedy Awards. He won two Screen Actor Guild Awards as the best actor in a television comedy despite playing a supporting role and in 2012 he was honored to receive the "Julie Harris Award for Lifetime Achievement" from the Actor's Fund.

Aside from *Seinfeld*, Jason has starred and guested in shows as *The Grinder*, *Drunk History*, *Friends*, *Two and a Half Men*, *The New Adventures of Old Christine*, *Criminal Minds*, *Monk*, *Franklin and Bash*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Bob Patterson*, *Listen Up*, *Hit the Road*, *Orville* and *Young Sheldon*. He also starred in the television films of *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Cinderella*, *A Christmas Carol* and *The Man Who Saved Xmas*. Additionally, his voice has been heard most notably in *Duckman*, *The Cleveland Show*, *American Dad*, *Tom and Jerry* and *Kody Kapow*.

His many films include: *Pretty Woman*, *Jacob's Ladder*, *Love Valor Compassion*, *Rocky and Bullwinkle*, *Dunston Checks In*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Shallow Hal*. In addition he directed the feature films *For Better or Worse* and *Just Looking*. He is also a distinguished television director, overseeing episodes of *Seinfeld*, *Til Death*, *Everybody Hates Chris*, *Mike and Molly*, *Criminal Minds* and *Franklin and Bash*. He won the American Country Music Award for his direction of Brad Paisley's video *Cooler Online*.

While still in college, his desire to work as a stage actor in New York came to be with his debut in the original Broadway cast of the Hal Prince/Stephen Sondheim musical *Merrily We Roll Along*. He continued starring on Broadway in the original casts of Kander and Ebb's *The Rink*, Neil Simon's *Broadway Bound*, Rupert Holmes' *Accomplice* and his Tony Award winning performance in *Jerome*

*Robbin's Broadway*. Jason also authored the libretto for that show which went on to win the Tony Award for Best Musical. After moving to LA, Jason continued working in the theater, notably serving as the artistic director for the Reprise Theatre Company and for the hit West Coast production of Mel Brook's *The Producers* in which he starred along with Martin Short. Most recently, Jason returned to Broadway to star in the Larry David comedy *Fish in the Dark* at the Cort Theater and recently appeared in the John Patrick Shanley's *The Portuguese Kid* at the Manhattan Theatre Club.

He has also helmed a number of stage productions including: *The God of Hell* at the Geffen Playhouse; *Broadway Bound* at the Odyssey; an updated revival of *Damn Yankees* and *The Fantasticks*, as well as *Sunday in the Park with George* for Reprise and most recently the world premiere of *Windfall* by Scooter Pietsch for the Arkansas Repertory Theater.

Mr. Alexander tours the country and the world performing his one-man show, *As Long As You're Asking, a Conversation with Jason Alexander*, which contains music, comedy and conversation. He can also be seen in his whimsical salute to Broadway musicals with some of the finest symphony orchestras throughout the United States. You can stay in touch with Jason via Twitter (@JasonAlexander)

**BRUCE DAVISON** -- Native to Philadelphia, Davison is an award-winning actor who has enjoyed a five decade career that has included everything from Shakespeare to *X-Men* to *Insidious*. An art major at Penn State University before turning his attention to theatre, he received his training at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. He made his professional stage debut in 1966 as Jonathan in *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad* at the Pennsylvania Festival Theatre. His Broadway debut came at the age of 21 as Troilus in *Tiger at the Gates* (1968) at the Vivian Beaumont Theatre. The year after, he was seen Off-Broadway in *A Home Away from Home* and appeared at Lincoln Center in the cast of *King Lear*.

Success in film came immediately for Davison with the critical and commercial hit *Last Summer*. Relocating to Hollywood to film *The Strawberry Statement*, he then achieved cult status playing second fiddle to a rat in *Willard* (Davison: "...the rat went on and got all the stardom, but I made him what he is today.") Davison went on to success on the West Coast winning the LA Drama Critics Award and the Drama-Logue Award for *Streamers* and *The Normal Heart* (with Richard Dreyfuss and Kathy Bates). Other notable theatre included *The Skin of Our Teeth*, *The Little Foxes*, *A Life in the Theatre*, and *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial* directed by Henry Fonda. He then returned to Broadway as the title role in *The Elephant Man* and *The Glass Menagerie* with Jessica Tandy.

Other films from the 70s and 80s include *Ulzana's Raid* opposite Burt Lancaster, and the chilling, realistic *Short Eyes*, the musical *Mame* with Lucille Ball, *The Jerusalem File*, *Grand Jury*, *Brass Target*, *Crimes of Passion*, and *Spies Like Us*. Also notable television included *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Deadman's Curve* (portraying Dean Torrence of the surf-era pop duo "Jan and Dean"), *Summer of My German Soldier* co-starring Kristy McNichol, *Lost and Found*, *Little Girl Fly Away*, *Color of Justice*, *Poor Little Rich Girl*, and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. Davison received an Oscar nomination for his sensitive portrayal of a man caring for his dying AIDS-infected lover in *Longtime Companion*, for which he received the Golden Globe, Independent Spirit, Los Angeles Film Critics Association, New York Film Critics Circle, and National Society of Film Critics awards. He went on to appear on the television series *Seinfeld*, *Touched By An Angel* (for which he received an Emmy nomination), and starred in the television adaptation of *Harry and the Hendersons* as George Henderson (and directed several episodes). Other recurring credits include *Tales From the Crypt*, *Outer Limits*, *thirtysomething*, and *Hunter*.

Notable films of the 90s include *Six Degrees of Separation* opposite Will Smith, *Short Cuts* (directed by Robert Altman and garnered a Golden Globe win for "Best Ensemble"), *Far from Home: The Adventures of Yellow Dog*, *The Crucible* with Daniel Day Lewis, *Grace of My Heart*, and *Apt Pupil* opposite Sir Ian McKellen. In 2000, Davison landed his well-known role of the Senator Kelly in *X-Men* and *X-Men 2*.

Since, other projects include (partial list): *Crazy/Beautiful* (2001), *Dahmer* (2002), *Runaway Jury* (2003), *Hate Crime* (2005), *Breach* (2007) with Chris Cooper and Laura Linney, *Passengers* and *The Line* (2009), *Camp Hell* (2010), Rob Zombie's *The Lords of Salem* (2012), *Black Beauty* (2015), *Insidious: The Last Key* (2017), and he just finished filming *Deep Stage* opposite Isaiah Washington. More recent TV appearances include (partial): *The Last Resort*, A&E's *Those Who Kill*, *The Practice*, *The L Word*, *Kingdom*, *Franklin & Bash*, *Blindspot*, *Imposters*, *The Fosters*, Amazon's *Mozart in the Jungle*, and *The Son*. Davison has also found time to keep up with his love for theater, performing regionally in (partial list): *To Kill a Mockingbird* (La Mirada), *F\*ck My Life* (Grey Ensemble Theatre), and *A Song At Twilight* (Pasadena Playhouse).

Davison had previously worked extensively as a spokesperson for a myriad of AIDS-related groups and was involved with organizations working to help at-risk children. More recently, he actively supports

the Make a Wish Foundation (playing Frank Shankwitz, the founder of Make A Wish, in the film *Wish Man*) along with avid support of the Make A Film Foundation.

**FRANCES FISHER** -- Born in Milford On-Sea, England to American parents, Frances Fisher's itinerant childhood living in the UK, Columbia, Canada, France, Brazil, Turkey, Italy, Iowa and Texas undoubtedly influenced her decision to live the actor's gypsy life. Ms. Fisher started her career as an apprentice at the Barter Theatre in Virginia, learning by working every job it takes to put on a show. Ms. Fisher has starred in over 30 theatrical productions (experimental, touring, Regional, off-off Broadway, off-Broadway,) including Elia Kazan's *The Chain*; *Hay Fever*; *Cat on A Hot Tin Roof*, *Summer And Smoke*; *Orpheus Descending*; 1984; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *Fool For Love*; Arthur Miller's last play *Finishing The Picture*; *Three More Sleepless Nights* (Drama League Award); The Taper's *The Cherry Orchard*; and *Barbecue* at the Geffen Playhouse, which won three NAACP 2018 Theatre Awards, including Best Ensemble. Ms. Fisher is a member of the Actors Studio, and her first acting teacher was Stella Adler.

On film, she is perhaps best known for her performance as Kate Winslet's mother in *Titanic*, which garnered Fisher a Screen Actors Guild nomination for Best Ensemble Cast. The film went on to receive 11 Academy Awards. Her numerous film credits include the Oscar-winning *Unforgiven*; *True Crime*; *The Big Tease*; *Tough Guys Don't Dance*; *Laws of Attraction*; *Blue Car*; *The Rising Place*; *The Kingdom*; *House of Sand & Fog*; *Wild America*; *In The Valley Of Elah*; *Jolene*; *The Perfect Game*; *The Lincoln Lawyer*; *The Host*; *The Stars Fell On Henrietta*; *Woman in Gold*; *Outlaws And Angels*; *Sinking of the Myths*; *A Beautiful Day*, *Run The Race* and *8000 Shots* is in the can, and she just wrapped *Shrimp* written and directed by Zelda Williams.

Television: Ms. Fisher played Lucille Ball in *Lucy & Desi: Before the Laughter* and has arc'd or guest-starred on *The Shield*; *Eureka*; *Torchwood*; *Touch*; *The Killing*; *Masters of Sex*; *Law & Order*; *Roseanne*; *The Mentalist*; *Two and a Half Men*; *Sons of Anarchy*; *ER*; *Grey's Anatomy*; *Children's Hospital*; *Private Practice*; *CSI*; *Castle*; *The Expanse*; *Criminal Minds*; *Swedish Dicks* and *Fargo*. She also starred in ABC's critically acclaimed series, *Resurrection*, and just shot a new HBO pilot, Damon Lindelof's *Watchmen*.

Ms. Fisher's activism runs the gamut from supporting #FamiliesBelongTogether, PeaceOverViolence.org, Hollywood Food Guild, StandForTheSilent.org (end bullying), Environment California, Race to Erase MS (EraseMS.org) & SurvivorMitzvah.org (emergency aid to forgotten Holocaust survivors). She is an executive board member of the Environmental Media Association (EMA), and is serving her 18th year on the National Board of SAG-AFTRA. She is an Ambassador for NWHM, working to create a National Women's History Museum in Washington, DC. Ms. Fisher was a surrogate for Bernie Sanders, spent time at Standing Rock where she learned of #MMIW (the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women - and the man-camps at every pipeline that breed sex-trafficking and sexual violence), spoke at the #MeToSurvivorsMarch LA in November 2017 and is a member of #TimesUp. Twitter: @Frances\_Fisher IG: @francesfisher Reading recommendation: *Healing The Soul of America*, by Marianne Williamson. For full credits see [IMDb.com](http://IMDb.com)

**CHRISTIAN BARILLAS** -- On TV, Christian is perhaps most recognizable as Ronaldo on *Modern Family*, where he appears opposite Tony winner and Emmy nominee Nathan Lane. In 2013, he was cast as a series regular on CBS's Jim Gaffigan pilot, a career turning point working under comedy star Gaffigan and co-creator Peter Tolan, a multiple Emmy winner. The pilot also starred Oscar winner Mira Sorvino and was shot on location in New York City. Other television highlights include *The Handmaid's Tale* (Emmy for Best Drama), *Grace & Frankie*, Chuck Lorre's upcoming *The Kominsky Method* (with Michael Douglas and Alan Arkin) and a recurring role as a transgender informant on FX's *The Bridge*, which won a Peabody Award in 2014. Christian also appeared alongside Tony winner Sutton Foster in the pilot episode of *Bunheads*, a series created by Amy Sherman-Palladino.

His professional career began with Center Theater Group's *A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings*, a short story by Gabriel García Márquez adapted for the stage by Nilo Cruz, who had just won a Pulitzer Prize. Christian then appeared in several productions in and around Los Angeles including Cornerstone Theater Company's *As You Like It* (Pasadena Playhouse, directed by Bill Rauch), *Sonia Flew* (Laguna Playhouse) and *A Christmas Carol* (South Coast Repertory), where he performed as Young Scrooge for several years. Christian helped develop Octavio Solis' *Lydia* under the direction of frequent collaborator Juliette Carrillo. He was a member of the original cast at Denver Center and its subsequent production at Yale Repertory Theater. The critically-acclaimed productions garnered multiple awards along the way for its writer, the director and the actors. Christian then spent a couple of years as a member of classical acting companies at Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Utah Shakespeare Festival. In Oregon, he appeared as Bingley in *Pride & Prejudice* and Sebastian in *Twelfth Night* (directed by Tony winner

Darko Tresnjak). A year later, during Utah's 50th Anniversary Season, he played Romeo in *Romeo & Juliet*, a career highlight.

For the West Coast Premiere of *The Motherf\*cker with the Hat*, Christian played Cousin Julio at South Coast Repertory for which he received an LA Drama Critics Circle nomination. Other theater credits in Los Angeles include *Macbeth* (with Antaeus Theatre Company), Tennessee Williams' *Vieux Carré* (playing the Writer), as well as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Othello* (Theatricum Botanicum). Internationally, he participated in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival with *The Contest*.

Along the way, Christian has also appeared in several independent films. Most notably, he worked with Oscar winning writer-director Martin McDonagh in *Seven Psychopaths* (BAFTA nomination Best British Film). He also appears in Blumhouse Production's *Best Night Ever* as well as *Bosco's Guitar*, a memorable short film depicting a real-life story of heroism in central Africa. Christian studied Journalism and Media at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and earned an MFA in Acting from UCLA's School of Theater, Film and Television, where he was the recipient of the George Burns Fellowship in Comedy. He was born in Guatemala City.

**JESSICA MERAZ** -- Born and raised in El Paso, TX, Jessica Meraz is the youngest of five children. Jessica left home at 18 to attend USC's School of Theater and pursue her dream of becoming an actress. Favorite TV credits include ABC Family's *Chasing Life*, *Baby Daddy*, the You Tube Red series *Do You Want to See a Dead Body* (opposite Rob Huebel and Terry Crews), and appearing as a storyteller in an episode of Comedy Central's hit series, *Drunk History*. In 2017, Meraz joined the main cast of TNT's hit drama series, *Major Crimes*, as Det. Camila Paige. Most recently, Jessica completed a virtual reality scripted pilot called *Splash Damage* and a feature, *Kill Me Twice*. Meraz is half Mexican from her mother's side and of Scottish and Irish ancestry on her father's and speaks fluent Spanish. Jessica is thrilled to be returning to her roots in theater and to be working with such iconic talent. In her spare time, Jessica is an avid salsa dancer and enjoys spending time with her beloved family.

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