

ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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— CASTING ANNOUNCEMENT — Artists Rep's Broadway-scale World Premiere Musical *Cuba Libre*

High-Caliber, Broadway-Credited Cast, Dancers, Designers

WHO: Artists Repertory Theatre
WHAT: *Cuba Libre*, Portland's world-class musical in the making
Featuring Music by Tiempo Libre
Book by Carlos Lacámara
Music & Lyrics by Jorge Gómez
Directed by Dámaso Rodríguez
Choreography by Maija Garcia
WHEN: October 3 - November 8, 2015
WHERE: Portland's Winningstad Theatre, 1111 SW Broadway Ave., Portland, Oregon
TICKETS: \$46-66 regular price; \$35 previews, students, under 25

- Pay-What-You-Can first preview performance October 3
- Preview performances: October 3-9
- Opening Night: October 10

SHOW IMAGE: Attached. Taken at a dance lab presentation October 2014. Photo ID: (front) Xavier Mili, lead vocals for Tiempo Libre with Maija Garcia, choreographer, audience spills onstage post show for an impromptu dance party. Photo Credit: Owen Carey.

BAND IMAGE: Attached. Photo Credit: Elvis Suarez/GlassWorks MultiMedia.

PRODUCTION PHOTOS AVAILABLE: October 7, 2015

OREGON PUBLIC BROADCASTING: [ArtBeat documentary series.](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Portland, Oregon | August 14, 2015. Artists Repertory Theatre announces the casting of high-caliber actors, dancers and designers from Portland, Los Angeles and New York for the world premiere production of the Broadway-scale new musical *Cuba Libre*.

Bursting with big stage chops, national and award-winning talent *Cuba Libre's* 21-person ensemble of actors, dancers, singers and musicians is a multi-ethnic, multi-disciplinary company ready to start the demanding journey of creating *Cuba Libre*.

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PRINCIPAL CAST

Alonso—[German Alexander](#)* (*West Side Story/NatTour+*; *Little Fish/LA*)
Lisandra—[Janet Dacal](#)* (*In the Heights/Bwy~+*; *Wonderland/Bwy~*; *Good Vibrations/Bwy~*)
Hector—[Brandon Contreras](#)* (*In the Heights/NatTour*; *West Side Story/NYC*)
Ignacio—[Nick Duckart](#)* (*In the Heights/FL+*; *Man of La Mancha /FL*)
Annie—[Sara Hennessy](#)* (*Hunter Gatherers/LA+*; *Grace/LA+*; *Intimate Apparel/PDX*)
Rudy—[Jose Luaces](#)* (*Big Fish/NYC*; *A Christmas Story:The Musical/Bwy,*)
Olga—[Luisa Sermol](#)* (*Sans Merci/PDX+*; *9 Parts of Desire/PDX+*; *Sideman/PDX+*)

+ award-winning performance
~ originating role

DANCE ENSEMBLE

Sun-Tzu Dunmore (*Cuba Libre/PDX 2014 dance lab*)
Jeff George (*Sesame Street Live/East Coast Tour*; *Cuba Libre/PDX 2014 dance lab*)
[Poundo "Sweet" Gomis](#)* (*Fela!/Bwy(2012)&NatTour*; *Cirque du Soleil*)
Nican Robinson (*Fuàkata/NYC*)
Julana Torres* (*Cuba Libre/PDX 2014 dance lab*)
Oscar Trujillo (*Margret Jenkins Dance/SF*; *BAM*, "*The Legend of Yauna*"/*NY*; *Organic Magnetics/NY*)
[Penelope Armstead-Williams](#)* (*Wild Party/OffBwy*; *Wicked/NatTour*)

Cuba Libre involves a primarily Latino creative team, many of whom are Cuban-American, focused on telling this story with authenticity, integrity and joy. Backing this production with deep Broadway-producing expertise is Tony-nominated producer [Susan Dietz](#) (*Fela!*, *Topdog/Underdog*, *It's Only a Play*). *Cuba Libre* represents the most ambitious project in Artists Rep's 33-year history, and comes at a time of renewed public interest in the relationship between the United States and Cuba.

Leading an impressive *Cuba Libre* creative team is the multiple award-winning director Dámaso Rodriguez, who is the artistic director at Artists Repertory Theatre. Along with Cuban-born playwright Carlos Lacámara and Tiempo Libre's musical director Jorge Gómez, the team includes Cuban-American choreographer Maija Garcia, whose musical theatre credits include *Fela!* with Bill T. Jones on Broadway, the national and international tours, and in film recently working with Spike Lee on *ChiRaq (2016)*. Scenic design is by Christopher Acebo who is the associate artistic director of Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) where his work includes the scenic design for the Tony Award-winning OSF-originated production of *All The Way* by Robert Schenkkan, winner of Best Play in 2014.

CREATIVE TEAM

Directed by Dámaso Rodriguez***
Choreographer —Maija Garcia***
Scenic Designer—Christopher Acebo**
Lighting Designer—Peter West
Projection Designer—Kaitlyn Pietras**
Costume Designer—Gregory Pulver^
Sound Designer—Sharath Patel^

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Dramaturg/ Musical Consultant—Nick Blaemire
Mary McDonald-Lewis—Dialect Coach^
Assistant Choreographer—Oscar Trujillo
Sound Design Consultant—Rodolfo Ortega^
Scenic Design Assistant—Cecily Madanes
Associate Scenic Designer—Megan Wilkerson**^

**Actors Equity Association*

***United Scenic Artists*

****Stage Directors and Choreographers Society*

^Artists Rep Resident Artist

ABOUT CUBA LIBRE

The irresistible rhythms of Cuban music drive this riveting, timely story of a man caught between countries, losses and loves, and his search for freedom. Set in America and Cuba, this universal tale reverberates across politics, ambition and romance with quick-witted dialogue, joy-filled dance and Latin-fusion beats. This Broadway-scale, contemporary musical features the internationally acclaimed, three-time Grammy-nominated band Tiempo Libre with a company of 21 actors, dancers and musicians in a not-to-be-missed theatrical event.

Cuba Libre director Dámaso Rodríguez says: "*Cuba Libre* is a dream many years in the making. When I was invited by Tiempo Libre and producer Susan Dietz to join this project over three years ago, we did not have a script or even a story. Our collective intention, however, was crystal clear: create a bold, bilingual musical theatre experience that would introduce Tiempo Libre's exhilarating brand of Afro-Caribbean music (known as "timba") to a wider audience while telling a universally resonant story of modern-day Cuban life and capturing some of the complexity of the immigrant experience. Despite our hopes, we could not have predicted that a team of such inspired collaborators as playwright Carlos Lacámara and choreographer Maija Garcia would join this project, nor could we have predicted that a surprising, still-developing chapter in the history of Cuba's relation to America would begin before *Cuba Libre*'s premiere."

Cuba Libre is a contemporary musical inspired by the collective histories of the members of Tiempo Libre, featuring a book by playwright Carlos Lacámara, the band's own music and spectacular choreography told by a company of 21 actors, dancers and musicians. The musical is a bilingual theatre experience with the majority of the dialogue in English and the music largely in Spanish. Told in flashbacks from present-day Miami to 1990s Cuba, the story centers around a Cuban musician still haunted by the sacrifices he, his friends and family made for him to pursue his artistic dreams in the U.S. while he makes a new life for himself as an American.

ABOUT TIEMPO LIBRE

On stage for every performance will be the three-time Grammy-nominated, Afro-Caribbean music group Tiempo Libre. One of the hottest Latin bands today, the band is equally at home in concert halls, jazz clubs, festival stages and dance venues, this group is celebrated for its sophisticated tropical music featuring an irresistible, exhilarating mix of jazz harmonies, contemporary sonorities and seductive Latin rhythms. Tiempo Libre's philosophy is that music is not just a way of life, it's a way of experiencing living.

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Throughout the past 14 years, the band has appeared around the globe and has been featured on television shows including The Tonight Show, Live from Lincoln Center, and Dancing with the Stars, as well as many entertainment programs on Univision and Telemundo. Since the group's formation in Miami in 2001, its members have been on a mission to share their Afro-Caribbean heritage with as wide an audience as possible, reinterpreting and reinvigorating music born from the meeting of their musical origins with their new American experience.

"The people in our audience are always a cultural mix," said Tiempo Libre founder and *Cuba Libre* music director Jorge Gómez. "While our Spanish-speaking audience goes because they want to hear and feel Latin rhythms, we always have a lot of native English-speakers at our concerts. They appreciate this culture, this rhythm."

Newly signed in 2015 to Universal Music Latin Entertainment in partnership with Universal Music Classics, Tiempo Libre released its latest album *Panamericano* on June 30, 2015 to unanimously rave reviews. More information at www.tiempolibremusic.com

TIEMPO LIBRE

Jorge Gómez—Pianist & Musical Director

Luis Beltran—Saxophone & Flute

Michel Ruíz Garcia—Trumpet

Xavier Mili Saint-Ives—Lead Vocals, maracas and guiro

Wilber Rodríguez—Bass, vocals

Israel Morales—Drums

Leandro González—Congas, vocals

PLAYWRIGHT

Carlos Lacámara was born in Havana, Cuba on November 11, 1958. He and his parents fled Fidel Castro's dictatorship when Lacámara was just two years old and moved first to Washington D.C., later to Puerto Rico and finally to California where he resides now. He graduated from UCLA, and then started his acting career. A professional actor for 30 years, Lacámara has appeared in over 100 television shows, including recent appearances in *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Mighty Med* and *Heroes Reborn*. He played "Paco" on NBC's *Nurses* for three years and the father in Nickelodeon's *The Brothers Garcia* for four seasons. In April 2000, Lacámara returned to Cuba after an absence of 40 years. His observations and conversations with his family and other Cubans inspired him to write the play, *Becoming Cuban*, which The Los Angeles Times called "A rare, insightful new play," and the LA Weekly proclaimed the "Best Political Drama of 2002." Set in an advertising agency during Fidel Castro's revolution, Lacámara's next play, *Havana Bourgeois*, was presented at the 59E59th Theatre in New York City, The Hayworth Theatre in Los Angeles and The Miracle Theater in Miami. His play, *Nowhere On The Border*, won The MetLife and Hola awards for Best New Play. It premiered at The Hayworth Theatre in 2006 where The Los Angeles Times described it as a work of "raw poignant power and insight." The play also enjoyed productions at Repertorio Español in Manhattan and Stageworks Hudson in Hudson, New York. *Exiles*, the third play in Lacámara's trilogy of Cuban plays, premiered at Artists Repertory Theatre last season. *Cuba Libre* is his first musical.

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MUSIC & LYRICS

Havana-born **Jorge Gómez** graduated from La ENA (Escuela Nacional de Arte), Cuba's premier music conservatory. As a pianist in Cuba, Gómez performed with artists such as Bobby Carcassés, Charanga Latina, Angel Quintero and Beatriz Márquez. Seeking freedom and opportunity, he escaped to Guatemala where he lived for five years as an arranger and record producer while also performing with artists including Giovanni Hidalgo, Willy Colón and Eddie Santiago. Upon his arrival in the United States in 2000, Gómez has expanded his activities as producer and arranger. He toured extensively with Albita through 2003. In 2001, Gómez founded Tiempo Libre, the first authentic all-Cuban timba band in the United States, and continues to serve as the group's musical director and pianist. Gómez produced the group's three Grammy-nominated albums *Bach in Havana*, *Arroz con Mango* and *Lo Que Esperabas*, as well as the group's 2011 album *My Secret Radio*. They have played on the world's most prestigious stages including Jazz at Lincoln Center; The Hollywood Bowl; Hong Kong's Kwai Tsing Theatre; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Dewan Filharmonik Petronas in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and Istanbul's İş Arts and Culture Center. This year Tiempo Libre released *Panamericano*, on Universal Music Latin Entertainment and Universal Music Classics. Guest artists included Jean Rodriguez, Yunel Cruz, Descemer Bueno, Frankie J, and Luis Fernando Borjas. On tour, the group will travel to Spain, the U.K., and China, with U.S. concerts in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

DIRECTOR

Dámaso Rodríguez is a Cuban-American director born in Miami, Florida. He is in his third year as artistic director of Artists Repertory Theatre. In 2001 he co-founded the Los Angeles-based Furious Theatre Company, where he served as co-artistic director until 2012. From 2007-2010 he served as associate artistic director of the Pasadena Playhouse. His directing credits include work at Artists Rep, the Pasadena Playhouse, Intiman Theatre, South Coast Repertory, Laguna Playhouse, A Noise Within, The Theatre@Boston Court, Naked Angels and Furious Theatre. Rodríguez is a recipient of the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award, the Back Stage Garland Award, the NAACP Theatre Award and the Pasadena Arts Council's Gold Crown Award. His productions have been nominated for multiple LA Weekly Theatre Awards and LA Stage Alliance Ovation Awards. In 2012, Rodríguez was honored by the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation as a Finalist for the Zelda Fichandler Award. He is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC).

Recent directing credits at Artists Rep include the Portland premieres of David Ives' adaptation of Pierre Corneille's *The Liar*, Nina Raine's *Tribes*, *Exiles* by Carlos Lácámara, the U.S. premiere of Dawn King's *Foxfinder*, and the West Coast premieres of Dan LeFranc's *The Big Meal* and Jeffrey Hatcher's *Ten Chimneys*. Other credits include Ruth & Augustus Goetz' *The Heiress* (starring Richard Chamberlain), Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* (starring Kelly McGillis) and Austin Pendleton's *Orson's Shadow* (starring Sharon Lawrence) at the Pasadena Playhouse; the reading of Steven Drukman's *The Prince of Atlantis* for the Pacific Playwrights Festival at South Coast Repertory, Clifford Odets' *Paradise Lost* at Intiman Theatre; Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit*, Tennessee Williams' *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*, Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*, Bernard Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma* at A Noise Within. Furious Theatre credits include the Los Angeles premieres of Craig Wright's *Grace*, Peter Sinn Nachtrieb's *Boom* and *Hunter Gatherers*, Bruce Norris' *The Pain and the Itch*, Yussef El Guindi's *Back of the Throat*, Richard Bean's *The God Botherers*, Neil LaBute's *The Shape of Things*, and the world premieres of Alex Jones' *Canned Peaches in Syrup* and Matt Pelfrey's *An Impending Rupture of the Belly* and *No Good Deed*, among others. In 2016, Rodríguez will return to Los Angeles to direct Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* at the acclaimed classical repertory theatre, A Noise Within. More information at www.damaso-rodriguez.com.

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CHOREOGRAPHER

Maija Garcia is a Cuban-American director, choreographer and educator based in Harlem.

Garcia's signature storytelling integrates live music, historical narrative and interactive design with bold and visceral movement. Most recently, she served as Director of Movement for Spike Lee's upcoming film *Chiraq*, and directed *Salsa, Mambo Cha Cha Cha* in Havana, Cuba (2015). Creative Director of *Fela!*, Garcia worked alongside Bill T. Jones as Associate Choreographer to develop the Tony award-winning musical off-Broadway (2008), on Broadway (2009), at National Theater of London (2010), and in Lagos Nigeria (2011). As Creative Director of the international touring production of *Fela!* (2011-2013), she also directed and choreographed *Fela! The Concert* for the Adelaide Arts Festival in Australia and the Auckland Arts Festival in New Zealand (2015). Garcia's stage collaborations include *The Legend of Yauna* (2013), featuring Zap Mama at BAM Fisher, *Fats Waller Dance Party* (2011/2012) with composers Jason Moran and Meshell N'degeocello (2011) at The Gatehouse/Harlem Stage, Kennedy Center, San Francisco & Chicago Jazz Festivals; *Ghosts of Manhattan*, an Organic Magnetics production (2012); *Neighbors* (2010) directed by Niegel Smith at the Public Theater; *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (2010) directed by Amanda Dehnert at Northwestern University; *YaYa Dreams A Future* (2010) and *Volcano's Birthright{s}* (2009).

Garcia's film and TV credits include choreography for Seun Kuti's music video RISE; Angelique Kidjo's Move on Up, PBS stations Special and BET Honors; *Fela!* television commercial; special features on Colbert Report, Late Night with Jimmy Fallon, The View and a staging of *Fela's Zombie* on So You Think You Can Dance, Canada.

In 2006, Garcia founded Organic Magnetics to engage cross-cultural dialogue and sustainable practice in the arts. She devises original work and produces live installations to generate urban folklore for the future. OM theater arts curriculum engages students in a transformative creative process. Garcia's work evokes a spiritual connection among artistic collaborators and audiences, encouraging interaction and participation. Co-writer and Director of *I Am New York: Juan Rodriguez* at El Museo del Barrio, she developed the story of New York's first immigrant as a stage play and is currently adapting *I Am New York* as a graphic novel.

Garcia is the artistic director of the SBI performing arts program at A. Philip Randolph High School in Harlem, an adjunct professor at CUNY City College Department of Theater and Speech and holds a BA in Sustainable Development from the California Institute of Integral Studies. She is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC). More information at www.organicmagnetics.com.

ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

Portland's premiere mid-size regional theatre company is led by Artistic Director Dámaso Rodriguez and Managing Director Sarah Horton. Founded in 1982, Artists Repertory Theatre is the longest-running professional theatre company in Portland. For the 2015/16 season Artists Rep will offer eight bold and entertaining plays written by internationally acclaimed playwrights and guided by esteemed directors. Artists Rep productions will feature the work of a core group of accomplished Resident Artists, each with a shared history and a shorthand for collaboration, working alongside guest artists from Portland and beyond. Artists Rep is also home to the ArtsHub, a program which offers residencies within Artists Rep's facility to smaller and emerging arts organizations with subsidized administrative, performance and rehearsal space, as well other infrastructural services. The Artists Rep facility serves as a community arts center, where performance venues and other public spaces are continually buzzing with activity.

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Artists Rep's mission is to engage diverse audiences in fresh, thought-provoking and intimate theatre. We are committed to world-class acting, directing, design and stagecraft that support new playwriting and aspire to embody great literature, moving audiences to truly feel — to *experience* — storytelling in a way that only the best live theatre can.

The 2015/16 Artists Repertory Theatre season is presented by Ronni Lacroute/WillaKenzie Estate. Our season media sponsors are The Oregonian and KINK. *Cuba Libre* is sponsored by The Standard and Oakwood America, with funding from the Kinsman Foundation, and with media sponsorship from Portland Monthly Magazine and media partnership with Oregon Public Broadcasting. Other season support comes from the Regional Arts Culture Council, Oregon Community Foundation, Collins Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation and Work for Art.

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