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Chicago Playworks for Families and Young Audiences Presents: ESPERANZA RISING

CHICAGO — The Theatre School at DePaul University will open the 2015-16 Chicago Playworks for Families and Young Audiences series with Esperanza Rising by Lynne Alvarez, based on the book by Pam Muñoz Ryan, music by Victor Zupanc, directed by Lisa Portes, with musical direction by Mark Elliott.

“This season we are excited to share three epic tales of flight and magic, based on some of our young audience member’s favorite stories,” says Lisa Portes, Artistic Director of Chicago Playworks. “Esperanza’s unforgettable journey takes her from the riches of her hacienda in Mexico to rags in the fields of California. The pages of this award-winning book come alive with vibrant music and stunning scenery, as Esperanza grows to overcome difficulties. We can’t wait to share this story with the young people of Chicago and their families!”

Based on the award-winning book, Esperanza Rising is recommended for ages 8 and up. Esperanza loves fancy dresses, pretty dolls, and birthday parties, but when tragedy hits her home in beautiful Mexico, she is forced to flee to the United States where things are very different for her. Facing new challenges, Esperanza learns to take care of herself and her family. In the process, she discovers her own power to create a new home.

Complimentary Teacher Guides for Esperanza Rising are available online for educators and interested audience members. These include activities and discussions for before and after the performance, which highlight core learning goals. Themes from this production include: culture; customs and traditions; home; hopes and dreams; immigration; justice, perseverance; prejudice; principles; social studies; society and class.

Esperanza Rising opens October 8, 2015 and runs through November 14, 2015, at DePaul’s historic Merle Reskin Theatre. Performances are Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 AM, and Saturdays 2 PM. Special Friday performances (10 AM) will occur on October 23 and November 6. A Sunday performance will be held on November 1 (2 PM). There is no Saturday performance on October 31st.

The performances on October 29 and November 1 will be interpreted in American Sign Language. Call TTY: 773.325.7975. October 10 is USO of Illinois Day. U.S. Armed Forces personnel and their families, with a valid military ID, can attend the
performance for free. Visit www.tixfortroops.org to reserve tickets, or call 312.922.1999 for more information. Join the cast for a post-performance autograph session after the performance on October 10. The performances on October 22 and November 7 will be followed by a post-show discussion. Visit the website or call the Box Office for additional details.

Tickets are $10. Subscriptions and group rates (15 or more people) are available. DePaul employees, alumni, and college students receive a discount (with ID). Tickets are available online or by calling the Box Office at (312) 922-1999. If patrons require wheelchair accessible and/or companion seating, or have any other hearing or vision needs, please let the Box Office staff know when you reserve your tickets, so that the theatre staff can make sure your visit to our theatre is an excellent one.

DePaul’s Merle Reskin Theatre is located at 60 E. Balbo Drive at Michigan Avenue, in Chicago. For information about parking, please contact the Box Office. The theatre is accessible via CTA busses (3-King Drive, 29-State Street, 146-Michigan/ Museums and others), and CTA El stops (Red, Blue, Brown, Green, Orange, Purple and Pink).

The cast features Paola Sanchez Abreu (Esperanza), Julia Atkin (Ramona), Michael Cohen (Miguel), Jack DeCesare (Luis; Alfonzo), Aida Delaz (Hortensia), Brian Healy (Don Sixto), Nicole Lockard (Marta), Talia Payomo (Isabel), and Claire Allegra Taylor (Modesta).

The production staff includes Lisa Portes (Director), Maggie Armendariz (Scenic Designer), Hailey Rakowiecki (Costume Designer), Jamie Davis (Lighting Designer), Sadie Tremblay (Sound Designer), Lauren Quinlan (Dramaturg), and Emily Mills (Stage Manager).

About the Director: Lisa Portes serves as the Head of Directing and the Artistic Director of Chicago Playworks for Families and Young Audiences for The Theatre School. Primarily a director of new plays and musicals, her work has been seen regionally at the Kennedy Center, South Coast Repertory Theatre's Hispanic Playwrights Project, McCarter Theatre Lab, A Contemporary American Theatre Festival, Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., the Sundance Theatre Lab, the Cape Cod Theatre Project, the Santa Barbara Theatre Lab, and the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference; in New York her work has been seen at Playwrights Horizons, Soho Rep, New York Theatre Workshop, the Public Theatre, the Flea Theatre and the Cherry Lane Alternative Theatre. Her Chicago Playworks for Families and Young Audiences credits include: Barrio Grrrl: A Musical by Quiara Alegría Hudes, Pinkalicious by Elizabeth and Victoria Kahn, Cinderella Eats Rice and Beans: A Salsa Musical by Karen Zacarías, and Highest Heaven by José Cruz Gonzalez. Lisa lives in Bridgeport with her husband, playwright Carlos Murillo, and their two children Eva Rose and Carlos Alejandro.

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The Theatre School at DePaul University educates, trains, and inspires students of theatre in a conservatory setting that is rigorous, disciplined, and culturally diverse. The school and its students strive for the highest level of professional skill and artistry. A commitment to diversity and equality in education is central to its mission. As an integral part of the training, The Theatre School produces public programs and performances from a wide repertoire of classic, contemporary, and original plays that challenge, entertain, and stimulate the imagination. The school seeks to enhance the intellectual and cultural life of the university community, the city, and the profession.