

IMPACT THEATRE REACHES FOR POP SUPERSTARDOM WITH *LEARN TO BE LATINA*

The world premiere by rising local playwright Enrique Urueta
starts February 18, opens February 20

BERKELEY, CA, JANUARY 21, 2010—Impact Theatre continues its take-no-prisoners 2009–10 14th season with the world premiere of Enrique Urueta’s *Learn to Be Latina*, directed by Mary Guzmán. *Learn to Be Latina* starts Thursday, February 18, 2010 and opens Saturday, February 20, 2010.

In *Latina*, Hanan is a promising young pop singer, and she has a record label dying to record her...until they find out she’s Lebanese. Not to worry, they say: Hanan can still be a star—as long as she learns to be Latina. Put through a whirlwind Latina bootcamp with an unlikely drill sergeant, she must now decide whether to stay true to herself or sacrifice her identity—and her budding relationship with the actual Latina woman with whom she’s fallen in love. **In this fiercely funny riff on cultural identities and the music business, sacred cows are poked with some very, very sharp sticks.**

Learn to Be Latina was originally conceived as a one-act play for Golden Thread Productions as part of its reOrient 2005 Festival, a program of short plays exploring the Middle East. Because playwright Enrique Urueta is not of Middle Eastern descent himself, he decided to do some research into various Middle Eastern entertainers. In this process he was surprised to learn that American Top 40 host Casey Kasem, actress Salma Hayek, and pop stars Shakira and Tiffany all share Lebanese heritage, which is rarely—if ever—discussed by western media outlets. This was particularly striking to him in the cases of Salma Hayek and Shakira to the extent that they are both unmistakably branded as Latina. The discovery enticed him into a deeper exploration of “ethnicity as a product”: the commodification and fetishization of artists’ ethnicity—assuming they have an ethnically “safe” or marketable background. **The *SF Weekly* wrote of the one-act, “*Latina* delivers a serious message about racial stereotyping in the pop music industry through zany, stylized theatrics.”**

Enrique Urueta, a local playwright on the rise, first came to Impact as its literary manager and received his professional playwriting debut with the company. After finding brilliant plays for Impact such as Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa’s *Say You Love Satan* and contributing to *Impact Briefs*, Urueta went off and got his playwriting MFA from Brown University. Upon his return to the Bay Area, he took a fresh look at *Latina* and developed it into a full-length play that fit perfectly into Impact’s season.

“Enrique and I have been trying for years to bring one of his full-length plays to La Val’s, and I have to say the wait was extremely worth it,” Impact Theatre Artistic Director Melissa Hillman says. **“This is, without a doubt, the most searing thing anyone will put on stage all year, not to mention flat-out hilarious.”**

The award-winning stage and film director Mary Guzmán, who helmed *Latina*’s first incarnation, returns to

direct this full-length production.

Learn to Be Latina is generously supported by grants from The Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation, the Theatre Bay Area CA\$H Grant program, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and The Zellerbach Family Foundation.

For more information and press photos, please visit impacttheatre.com.

ABOUT IMPACT THEATRE

Since 1996 Impact Theatre has spoken to a new generation of theatregoers and enthusiasts alike who want to see something fresh and bold on stage. Impact's audience ranges from students to professionals to seniors, all of whom share a taste for exciting, unpretentious theatre that doesn't conform to stale assumptions of what constitutes high culture. Impact's primary mission is to directly contribute to the future of American theatre through focusing on new plays by emerging playwrights. **Impact has produced 18 full-length world premieres, including 12 by local playwrights, as well as dozens of world-premiere ten-minute plays by burgeoning writers nationwide in the *Impact Briefs* series.** Impact also prides itself on its fast-paced, vital, contemporary spins on classic drama. Impact shows compel, provoke, and inspire, at prices everyone can afford. And nowhere else in the Bay Area can you eat pizza and drink beer while you're watching a play. *The East Bay Express* named Impact "Best Small Theatre Company" in its 2008 Best of the East Bay issue and always includes Impact shows in its year-end top-ten lists.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

PRODUCTION: *Learn to Be Latina* by Enrique Urueta, directed by Mary Guzmán
WORLD PREMIERE
Previews Feb 18 & 19 · Opens Feb 20 · Runs through Mar 27 · Thu-Sat 8pm

WHERE: La Val's Subterranean, 1834 Euclid Ave, Berkeley, CA 94709

ADMISSION: Advance tickets: \$17 general / \$12 students, seniors, and TBA members
At the door: \$20 general / \$15 students, seniors, and TBA members
Previews: \$10 advance / Pay-what-you-wish at the door

IMPORTANT: PLEASE LIST PRICES AS \$10-20.

MORE INFO: impacttheatre.com

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