



ACCLAIMED STORYTELLER DAVID GONZALEZ VISITS
PLAYHOUSE'S ROSENTHAL NEXT GENERATION THEATRE SERIES
APRIL 17 WITH WORLD PREMIERE FINDING NORTH

(CINCINNATI) - The Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park welcomes storyteller David Gonzalez to its Rosenthal Next Generation Theatre Series on April 17 to present FINDING NORTH, a world premiere play that tells the compelling stories of people who came to this part of the country in search of a better life. Formerly titled FOUR WALLS/OPEN SKY, the show was commissioned by the Playhouse and also will tour to area schools May 3 to May 14.

FINDING NORTH was inspired by the upcoming opening of Cincinnati's Underground Railroad Freedom Center. The show is a one-man play with music and is drawn from oral histories of Cincinnati area residents, as well as historical and cultural research, conducted by Mr. Gonzalez this past fall. With compassion and with humor, Mr. Gonzalez brings to the stage the powerful real stories of the strivings, sacrifices and dreams of local individuals.

Included among the stories is a harrowing account of a young Guatemalan woman's journey over the mountains and river from Mexico into the United States; the story of an Appalachian mother's concerns when her daughter expresses interest in becoming the first person in her family to attend college; a tale of a Muslim teenager and the prejudice his family faced following the attacks of September 11; the memories of a Jewish woman living in Hungary during the height of Nazi occupation; and the story of a Black high school student for whom the Cincinnati riots sparked dialogue with his grandfather about a personal encounter with the Ku Klux Klan. All of the stories are woven together with the extended history of John P. Parker, a former slave who dedicated his life to helping fugitive slaves escape through the Underground Railroad in southern Ohio.

To research the piece, Mr. Gonzalez visited or spoke with a broad spectrum of individuals at local historical and cultural organizations, including Su Casa Hispanic Ministry Center, Hebrew Union College, the Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati, Urban Appalachian Council, Sycamore Senior Center and Taft High School, among others. He also visited two houses that were used by escaping slaves as part of the Underground Railroad network: The John P. Parker House in Ripley, Ohio, and the Carneal House in Covington, Kentucky.

According to Mr. Gonzalez, "I was touched by the willingness of so many people from so many different backgrounds to want to support the project - their belief in the value of what I was doing gave me faith. I also was struck by the similarities of the many stories I heard. The struggle for human rights is on-going all around us within every community. It was moving to witness this from so many different points of view, from so many different faces, with so many different voices - all of them saying the same thing: 'We are people, we deserve the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' Every day heroes are around us all the time."

Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park Education Director Bert Goldstein, who has been working closely with Mr. Gonzalez to produce the project, says, "FINDING NORTH is a play that wrestles with the idea of what freedom is. For many people living in this country today, freedom still comes with a price and on-going sacrifice. That can be an important message for young people who never have had to struggle."

David Gonzalez is one of this country's most talented and sought after story tellers. He has performed to more than 2,500 audiences across the globe, including several appearances on Broadway, as well as at London's Royal National Theatre, the Smithsonian Institution, Lincoln Center Theater and in hundreds of schools. He has been honored with the Helen Hayes Performing Artist of the Year Award, and his poetry has been featured on Bill Moyers' documentary FOOLING WITH WORDS on PBS as well as National Public Radio's ALL THINGS



CONSIDERED. Additionally, he is a poet/commentator for Studio 360, a nationally syndicated radio program on the PRI network.

Mr. Gonzalez will be accompanied by the live, original music of guitarist Marvin J. Sewell. Mr. Sewell has performed and recorded with such legendary artists as David Sandborn, Marcus Miller, Jorge Sylvester, George Benson, Jack DeJohnette and many others and has toured with Sekou Sundiata and Ani DiFranco. He also performed the blues slide guitar for Hannibal Peterson's composition AFRICAN PORTRAITS in collaboration with the St. Louis Symphony, New Music Symphony and Westchester Symphony orchestras. Today, he spends most of his time writing music for his own band, The Marvin Sewell Group, which has performed all over New York City.

FINDING NORTH is made possible thanks to a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support for this production was provided by Lynne Skilken and Robert S Brown.

FINDING NORTH will receive two public performances as part of this year's Rosenthal Next Generation Theatre Series for children. The show will be performed in the Rosenthal Plaza at the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park on April 17 at 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. for audiences ages 12 and up. No one under the age of 12 will be admitted. Made possible by the Lois and Richard Rosenthal Foundation, the Rosenthal Next Generation Theatre Series involves youngsters in the excitement of theatre. To ensure the enjoyment of all in attendance, parents are asked not to bring children younger than the ages recommended for each production.

All 2:00 p.m. performances are signed for the hearing impaired courtesy of Cincinnati State. Tickets are \$4 for theatergoers ages four to 18 and \$5 for adults through the Playhouse box office at 513/421-3888 or toll-free in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana, 800/582-3208. Tickets also are available through the Playhouse web site at www.cincyplay.com. Parking is free. The show also will tour to approximately 20 area schools for grades seven to 12 from May 3 to May 14 as part of the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park's Procter & Gamble Community Outreach Tours. A very limited number of school tour performances still are available. For more information, contact Bert Goldstein at 513/345-2242.

Artists fly to and from Cincinnati on Delta Connection COMAIR, the Playhouse's official airline.

The Playhouse is supported, in part, by the generosity of the tens of thousands of individuals and businesses that give to the Fine Arts Fund.

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The Playhouse also receives funding from the City of Cincinnati.