



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 11, 2020

**ARIZONA THEATRE COMPANY LAUNCHES DIGITAL PLAY LINEUP WITH “ALMA”
BY ATC’S 2019 LATINX PLAYWRIGHT AWARD WINNER BENJAMIN BENNE**
*Expanded Series of Digital Plays, Readings, Monologues Offer Theatre Experiences
Until Live Mainstage Productions Can Safely Occur*

Arizona Theatre Company on August 18 will launch the first of its series of creative digital performance offerings with ***Alma***, the story of a daughter and her mother and the thread of the American dream.

Written by Benjamin Benne, ATC’s 2019 Latinx Playwright Award winner, ***Alma*** will be accessible on Arizona Theatre Company’s website (www.arizonatheatre.org) as well as on Facebook, YouTube and Vimeo from Aug. 18 at 5 p.m. through August 22 at 5 p.m. A variety of programming around the play also will be available. There is no charge to view the play, but donations to Arizona Theatre Company are encouraged and will be greatly appreciated.

A selection for the Denver Center for Performing Arts’ Colorado New Play Summit and The Eugene O’Neill Theater Center’s National Playwrights Conference, ***Alma*** has been named one of the top eight best unproduced Latinx plays by the 50 Playwrights Project and winner of the 2019 Blue Ink Playwriting Award from 752 submissions by American Blues Theatre.

Alma is directed by Catherine María Rodríguez, a story shaper, performance maker and culture shaker who also serves as Vice President of Unscripted Development and Programming for Lifetime television.

The story follows working mom Alma (Danaya Esperanza) who has singlehandedly raised her daughter, Ángel (Amandla Jahava) on tough love, home-cooked comida and lots of prayers. On the eve of the all-important SAT, Alma discovers her daughter isn’t at home studying. A schooling and *la chancla* (flip flop) await Ángel at home, but so does a creeping realization that more is at stake than just a test score. A sacrifice from Alma’s past weighs heavy on their present; now, Alma fears the worst nightmare may soon be their reality. Will the American Dream cost them a life together?

“Benjamin will be a force in the American Theatre, and it’s clear once you’ve heard his writing,” says Arizona Theatre Company’s Artistic Director Sean Daniels. “Also, as theater 90 minutes from the border, Arizona Theatre Company has a unique responsibility to continually center the stories of people whose lives it affects.

“As The State Theatre of Arizona, and one dedicated to equity and reflecting our community, these are the types of stories the new Arizona Theatre Company will continue to tell. Stories filled with heart, joy, family, and humanity – as we entertain, educate, connect, reflect, and unite our community,” he added.

Stage direction for ***Alma*** will be provided by Maria Amorocho. Ido Levran is the Technical Director and Glenn Bruner is the Stage Manager.

Programming surrounding the showing of ***Alma*** includes:

- ***ATC’s Hang & Focus Live*** featuring interviews with playwright Benne and director Rodriguez by Artistic Director Daniels on ATC’s Facebook Live show – Aug. 14 at 4 p.m.
- **Opening Night Live Stream** on Facebook Live – Aug. 18, 5 p.m.
- **Town Hall: “Migration, Liberation, and Belonging: A Conversation on Black Immigrant Freedom Struggles in the U.S.”** An in-depth panel discussion with experts from across the country – Aug. 20, 2020, 5 p.m.
- ***ATC’s Hang & Focus Live*** featuring interviews with ATC Playwright-in-Residence Elaine Romero and the ATC 2020 Latinx Playwright Award Winner (to be announced Aug. 19) – August 21, 2020, 4 p.m.
- **Facebook Group Streaming** – August 22, 2020, 1 p.m.
- **Facebook Talk Back with the Actors** – August 22, 2020, 3 p.m.

“Our robust digital season will not disappoint,” notes Chanel Bragg, ATC’s associate artistic director. “Here at Arizona Theatre Company, we are committed to providing quality programming both on our stages and on our screens.”

ATC’s *Digital Season* also includes: ***Slow Food*** by Wendy MacLeod, Starring Brian Beacock, Joel Van Liew and Daina Griffith – ATC Premiere September 15, 2020; ***Somewhere Over the Border*** by Brian Quijada, coproduced with Teatro Vista – ATC Premiere October 7, 2020; ***Covenant*** by York Walker, Directed by Tamilla Woodard – ATC Premiere October 27, 2020; and ***The Realness*** by Idris Goodwin, Directed by Wendy Goldberg – ATC Premiere: November 2020.

Additional plays in production and set for digital showings (dates to be announced) are ***The Heath*** by Lauren Gunderson and directed by Sean Daniels; ***Walk Into The Sea*** by ATC Playwright-in-Residence Elaine Romero and directed by Melissa Crespo; ***Vivian’s Music: 1969*** by Monica Bauer; ***Road To The Pacific: The Story of Lewis and Clark***, a series of five 20-minute radio play podcast episodes coproduced with Dad’s Garage Theatre Company; ***Maverick: The John McCain Project***; ***Coronologues***, created and curated by ATC Associate Artistic Director Chanel Bragg; ***Forensics*** by

Reggie White and Gunderson; and ***The Making of a Great Moment*** by Peter Nachtrieb, in association with Z Space in San Francisco.

Plans are to open Daniels' first fully chosen Main Stage lineup in January, with shows to be presented throughout the spring and summer, a time when ATC has traditionally been dark, and ending in November. All shows will offer a video option for any ticket holders who aren't able to be in the theatre when shows are performed.

The 54th Main Stage Season lineup includes: ***My 80 Year Old Boyfriend***, directed by Daniels and created by Charissa Bertels, Christian Duhamel and Ed Bell; ***Pru Payne*** by Steven Drukman, directed by Daniels; and a face-to-face musical evening with ***Nina Simone: Four Women*** by Christina Ham, directed by Tiffany Nichole Greene.

ATC will present two plays in Summer 2021: ***Women in Jeopardy!*** by Wendy MacLeod and ***how to make an American Son*** by christopher oscar peña and directed by Kimberly Senior in a co-production with The Rattlestick Playwrights Theater. Matthew Lopez's ***The Legend of Georgia McBride***, directed by Meredith McDonough will be on-stage in Fall 2021. Specific show dates will be forthcoming.

Current plans call for a mini-season that will run from November/December 2021 through late spring 2022, kicking off with ***Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley***, directed by Melissa Crespo.

A special 6-play 2020 Star Package is currently on sale and offers a seat at six show, with dates and seating to be determined. Single tickets will be available for purchase later this year.

For more information, visit www.arizonatheatre.org.

Bios:

Benjamin Benne (Playwright): Benjamin Benne (he/him) is ATC's 2019 National Latinx Playwriting Award Winner, as well as the 2019 Blue Ink Playwriting Award Winner and a 2019 KCACTF Latinx Playwriting Award Recipient. He is an MFA Playwriting Candidate at the Yale School of Drama, a Playwrights' Center Affiliated Writer, and represented by Paradigm Talent Agency. www.benjaminbenne.com

Catherine María Rodríguez (Director): A story shaper, performance maker, and culture shaker, Catherine María Rodríguez serves collaboration, community, and loqqs wherever the art takes her and whatever stage it's in. Cat's craft entails bringing discernment to decision-making and Joy to the process. Experiences as a performer, dramaturg, and organizer guide both her theater making and critical writing. In this, she's attentive to not only what's being made, but also how as well as through whose bodies and eyes. Cat works from a structural analysis and draws on her skills as a trained facilitator to do so. Black/Latinx feminisms as well as collectivist organizing methods fundamentally inform her arts practice and pathways through the world. She's a "people person" with a politic and a love for the ridiculous. She has worked with The Public, DCPA's New Play Summit, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, O'Neill National Playwrights' Conference, NYTW Next Door, Ars Nova ANT Fest, Yale Rep, Baltimore Center Stage, El Círculo Teatral (México), Borderlands, and Steppenwolf, among others. She has organized alongside Unidad Latina en Acción (New Haven, CT), New Sanctuary Coalition (NYC), and Education-Based Latino Outreach (Baltimore). Cat works in English and Spanish, talks with her hands, y anda con ganas. A freelance artist, she considers herself a nomad but always names New Orleans and Nicaragua home. www.catlikemeow.com Twitter: @latinadramaturg

Maria Amorocho (Stage Directions): Maria Amorocho is a frequent participant in Phoenix Theatre Company's Festival of New Plays and Musicals, including the 2020 premiere of ***Americano***. NewCarpa Theater: ***Voices of Valor***; ***My Beloved World***; Director, ***Miranda's Curse***. Other credits: ***Billy Elliot***,

Our Town, NINE, Picnic (Phoenix Theatre Company); **BAUER** (BLK BOX PHX); **The Glass Menagerie** (Guest Artist, GCC); **Good People, Body Awareness, Sight Unseen** (Actors Theatre of Phoenix); **BIG: The Musical** (Theater Works). Film: *Scare Me Vol.1, My Sekret War, A Life Connected, Jolene*. Maria is represented by The Leighton Agency and is a proud member of Actors Equity Association.

Danaya Esperanza (Alma): OFF-BROADWAY: National Black Theatre: **Bayano** (Yemaya). The Public Theatre for colored girls . . . (***lady in orange***), **Tempest** Mobile Unit (Ariel), **Twelfth Night** Mobile Unit (Viola), CSC/OSF: Play On! Shakespeare (Various). Esperance: **Breitwisch Farm** (Zainabu); New York Theatre Workshop [NYTW]: **Mary Jane** (Amelia/Kat), **Othello** (Emilia u/s). Playwrights Horizons/Clubbed Thumb: **Men on Boats** (Seneca Howland/The Bishop). Soho Rep: **Washeteria** (Lucy/Consuela). Signature Theatre: **Our Lady of Kibeho** (Schoolgirl). REGIONAL: Denver Center [DCPA]: **Alma** (Alma). New York Stage and Film-Powerhouse [NYSF]: **Annie Salem** . . . (Gaby/77ilith). Seattle Rep: **Joe Turner Vino y Se Fue** (Molly Cunningham). Shakespeare Theatre Company: **Romeo and Juliet**. McCarter Theatre: **Protect the Beautiful Place** (Symphony); The Goodman Theatre: **Another Word for Beauty** (Luzmery). FILM: *After Party*. TELEVISION: *The Blacklist, Elementary*. Proud AEA Member. TRAINING: The Juilliard School (Raúl Juliá Memorial Scholarship in Drama).

Amandla Jahava (Angel): Amandla Jahava is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama, where her credits include Shakespeare's **As You Like It, The Girl Is Chained**, and **If Pretty Hurts Ugly Must Be a Muhfucka**. Other credits include *In the Red and Brown Water, the feels...*(KMS), *The Red Tent* (Yale Cabaret); **Miss Julie, Lear** (Yale Summer Cabaret); and **The Colored Museum** at CalArts, where she earned a B.F.A. in acting. She has also been seen on the stages of Denver Theater Center, Roundabout Theater, The Classical Theater of Harlem. Amandla was a Los Angeles County Arts Grant recipient in 2015, and is an affiliate member of the Antaeus Company. She was assistant director to Lisa Gay Hamilton on **Sleep Deprivation Chamber** (CalArts School of Theater) and to Jason Alexander for **Broadway Bound** (Odyssey Theatre Ensemble). TV: Showtime: *How to Make Love to a Black Woman*. HBO's *DMZ*. @_amandla

CREATIVE TEAM

Technical Director: Ido Levran
Stage Director: Maria Amorocho
Stage Manager: Glenn Bruner

FACT SHEET

Alma

Written by Benjamin Benne
Directed by Catherine María Rodríguez

Viewing Dates

Aug. 18-22

Viewing Options

ATC website (www.arizonatheatre.org), YouTube channel, Facebook and Vimeo.

Contact:

Steve Carr, The Kur Carr Group, Inc., (602) 317-3040

About Arizona Theatre Company:

Under new leadership and now celebrating its 54th Season, Arizona Theatre Company is truly "The State Theatre," with the largest subscriber base of any performing arts organization in Arizona. More than 130,000 people each year attend performances at the historic Temple of Music and Art in Tucson and the elegant Herberger Theater Center in downtown Phoenix.

Each season of high-quality productions reflects the rich variety of world theatre – from classic to contemporary plays, from musicals to new works – and audiences enjoy the rich emotional experience and joy that can only be captured through live theatre. ATC is the preeminent professional theatre in the state of Arizona. Under the direction of Artistic Director Sean Daniels and Managing Director Geri Wright,

ATC operates in two cities – unlike any other League of Resident Theaters (LORT) company in the country.

ATC shares the passion of the theatre through a wide array of outreach programs, educational opportunities, access initiatives and community events. With more than 800 Education & Engagement activities through schools and summer programs, ATC focuses on teaching Arizona's youth about the creative power of dramatic literature and how it can enrich their own lives in multiple ways

ATC reaches far beyond the metropolitan areas of Tucson and Phoenix, enriching the theatre learning experience nationally for current and future audiences.