

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Alert for Theatre Editors, Reviewers and Calendar Listings

Chance Theater proudly presents a staged reading of
HONGO

**Chance Theater's 2022 resident playwright, Exal Iraheta
is back with a brand new phantasmagoric play**

ANAHEIM, CA: Chance Theater, Anaheim's official resident theater company, is delighted to present a staged reading of a brand new mind-bending play as part of the 2022 OTR New Works Series. Written by Chance Theater's 2022 resident playwright **Exal Iraheta** and directed by **Khanisha Foster** ("Yellowman"), this staged reading will be presented on Wednesday, August 3rd and Sunday, August 7th at 7:30pm.

"Hongo" is about gifted scientist Dr. Mirian Reyes who has discovered a method of using mycelium cells to heal damaged brains. When her radically progressive son, Dagoberto, is left in a vegetative state after a performance art show turns violent, Mirian uses her research to revive him. However, the results are not as she imagined after his consciousness takes a life of its own, leaving Mirian in deep shiitake.

After watching the documentary "Fantastic Fungi" (which he highly recommends), playwright Exal Iraheta explains that he "was astounded by two things: One, how scientists pronounce fungi (not like "fun-guy"... I know my fave pun too); and two, how the mycelium network mirrors our own neurology." Seriously. Do a quick image search comparing the two and you'll see what Exal's talking about. Iraheta continues, "And like any great fungal infection, I mean idea, that small spore of information led me to reflect on my indigenous heritage and beliefs, and relationship to the planet. This made me wonder if there ever can be a future in which we can live in harmony with nature again? And what would it take to get there? So I thought, why not explore it through story. Plus, listen, I have never done shrooms (for real) but they're literally wondrous organisms, and I wonder what they would have to say if they could talk (or maybe if we listened?). I'm very excited to start the exploration of this story with Chance Theater as it's very new with hidden moments yet to discover, and I look forward to future conversations because time is ticking for our blue marble."

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT

Exal Iraheta (he/his) is a Chicago-based Salvi-American playwright & screenwriter by way of Houston, TX. Humorous and uncomfortable, his work explores the intersections of identity, family, violence, sexuality, and magic through his lens as a brown queer first-generation son. Exal is a 2020/2021 Goodman Theatre's Playwrights Unit member and a selected playwright in the 2018 Fornés Playwriting Workshop. In 2019 his play *They Could Give No Name* was chosen for Victory Gardens' Ignition Festival, received an honorable mention in the American Playwriting Foundation's 2019 Relentless Award, and was a finalist in the 2020 National Playwrights Conference and the 2020 Judith Royer Excellence in Playwriting Award. Most recently, his play *Last Hermanos* was selected for Magic Theatre's 2021 Virgin Play Festival and was produced as an audio drama by A Red Orchid Theatre. *Last Hermanos* will premiere in Spring 2022 as part of A Red Orchid Theatre's 2021-22 season. Exal earned an MFA from Northwestern University's Writing for the Screen and Stage program and a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in Film & Video Production. He is incredibly excited to work with Chance Theater this season.

Chance Theater's 2022 OTR Reading Series would not be possible without our incredible sponsors: National Endowment for the Arts, The Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation, and Jennifer Ruckman & Ken Favell.

To schedule press interviews, request photos, schedule press comps or for any additional information, please contact Casey Long at (714) 900-3284 or by e-mail at casey@chancetheater.com.

ABOUT OTR NEW WORKS SERIES

Chance's On the Radar (OTR) New Works Program consists of a new script reading series, a playwright's residency, and a commissioning program all geared towards supporting the creation of diverse new stories by emerging U.S. playwrights. The goal of OTR is to create a deep and long-term commitment to playwrights by offering them access to a community of artists and audiences, a supportive environment, and the freedom to explore their own boundaries and interests. Past Resident Playwrights include Krista Knight, Jessica Huang, Joanna Garner, Ted Malawer, Jenny Connell Davis, Lauren Yee, Nick Jones, Marshall Paillet, Zayd Dohrn, and Adam Szymkowicz. Our 2021 Resident Playwright is B.J. Tindal.

ABOUT CHANCE THEATER

Proud to be one of the leading ensemble-driven theatre companies in Southern California, CHANCE THEATER has received the National Theatre Company grant from American Theatre Wing for “nurturing a community of artists in ways that strengthen and demonstrate the quality, diversity, and dynamism of American theatre.” The Chance recently won eight OC Theatre Guild Awards, including Outstanding Production of a Musical for its intimate revival of *Fun Home*. Previously, Chance Theater won eight Ovation Awards, including four for Best Production of a Musical (Intimate Theatre), as well as four LADCC Awards, including the Polly Warfield Award for Outstanding Season. The Anaheim City Council named Chance Theater “the Official Resident Theater Company of Anaheim” in 2014, and Arts Orange County has twice named the Chance as “Outstanding Arts Organization.” Known for using bold and personal storytelling to promote dialogue and connection within the Southern California theatrical landscape, the Chance is committed to contributing to a more compassionate, connected and creative community. As a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group, The Theatrical Producers League of Los Angeles, and OC Theatre Guild, Chance Theater continues to bring national attention to the Southern California and Orange County theater scenes.

CALENDAR LISTING

WHAT: *HONGO*

Gifted scientist Dr. Mirian Reyes has discovered a method of using mycelium cells to heal damaged brains. So when her radically progressive son, Dagoberto, is left in a vegetative state after a performance art show turns violent, Mirian uses her research to revive him. However, the results are not as she imagines after his consciousness takes a life of its own, leaving Mirian in deep shiitake.

WHEN: Wednesday, August 3 and Sunday, August 7th @ 7:30pm

WHERE: Chance Theater @ Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center on the Cripe Stage,
5522 E. La Palma Ave., Anaheim, CA 92807

TICKETS: \$15

Call (888) 455-4212 or visit www.ChanceTheater.com.

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