

Central Works

New Play Theater

For press materials and hi-res color press photos visit

<http://centralworks.org/king-of-cuba/>

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/Central-Works-Theater-59720747018/>

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CENTRAL WORKS 2018 SEASON

King of Cuba

Written by Cristina García (based on her novel)

With a cast that includes Lesbian-gender-bending

Comedian Marga Gomez, and Grammy-winning “bongocero” Carlos Caro.

Directed by Gary Graves

July 21 – Aug 19

Berkeley City Club

2315 Durant Avenue, Berkeley

King of Cuba, a new comedy by award-winning writer Cristina García, opens with a press night on Saturday, July 21, and runs through August 19 (previews July 19 & 20) at the historic Berkeley City Club. The summer adventure of the Central Works 2018 season *King of Cuba*, is developed by Ms. García in the Central Works Writers Workshop featuring the lesbian-gender-bending comedian Marga Gomez, and the Grammy-winning “bongocero” Carlos Caro. All are Cubanx celebrities living in the Bay Area. Directed by Gary Graves, the full cast includes Marco Aponte, Leticia Duarte, Elena Garrity, Marga Gomez, Ben Ortega and Steve Ortiz.

Central Works 60th world premiere is the first theatrical production for National Book Award finalist Cristina García. With García’s similarly titled novel as its inspiration, her play intertwines the stories of two combative octogenarian Cubans: the vainglorious Cuban dictator, “El Comandante,” who struggles to maintain a tenuous grip on power, and the irascible exile, Goyo Herrera, who seethes in Miami, hell-bent on sending El Comandante to his grave. Both wrestle with loves lost, people wronged, the frailties of old age, and the legacies they’ll soon enough be leaving behind.

García developed this stage adaptation of her novel in the Central Works Writers Workshop. Marga Gomez is transcending her usual solo-comic boundaries (“She’s like a lesbian Lenny Bruce,”—Robin Williams) to portray El Comandante, a gender-bending, satirical homage to Fidel Castro. Throughout the play, the virtuoso drumming of Carlos Caro becomes the character of Cuba itself, weaving through the tumultuous action and binding the characters together. The production features six Latinx actors in a myriad of roles, guided by Gary Graves direction. Ms. García remarks, “The idea for *King Of Cuba*—both the novel, and its theatrical adaptation—emerged from years of thinking and writing about Cuba. Half my family left the island and its new revolution when I was three years old; the other half remained by choice. My maternal grandmother, in particular, was

a vocal supporter of Fidel Castro, while her own daughter (my mother) was an equally passionate opponent. It is this deep, decades-long rift—with its seemingly insoluble problems, bad blood and endless propaganda—that has dominated the Cuban cultural and political landscape for the last sixty years. This is my attempt to wrestle with—in a darkly comic, satirical fashion—the intransigencies on both sides of this political divide.”

Cristina García (playwright) is the author of seven novels, including: *Dreaming in Cuban*, *The Agüero Sisters*, *Monkey Hunting*, *A Handbook to Luck*, *The Lady Matador’s Hotel*, *King of Cuba*, and *Here in Berlin*. García has edited two anthologies, *Cubanísimo: The Vintage Book of Contemporary Cuban Literature* and *Bordering Fires: The Vintage Book of Contemporary Mexican and Chicano/a Literature*. Two works for young readers, *The Dog Who Loved the Moon*, and *I Wanna Be Your Shoebox* were published in 2008 and a young adult novel, *Dreams of Significant Girls*, in 2011. A collection of poetry, *The Lesser Tragedy of Death*, was published in 2010. García’s work has been nominated for a National Book Award and translated into fourteen languages. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Whiting Writers’ Award, a Hodder Fellowship at Princeton University, and an NEA grant, among others. She is the founder and artistic director of Las Dos Brujas Writers’ Workshops and lives in the San Francisco Bay area.

Marga Gomez is a GLAAD Award and LA Theater Ovation Award-winning writer and performer of 12 solo plays which have been presented at The Public Theater, La Mama ETC, Dixon Place, Highways, Bootleg Theater, nationally and internationally. She is an original member of the legendary Latino ensemble Culture Clash. She has been featured at numerous theater festivals including Montreal’s Just For Laughs and The Edinburgh Fringe Festival. *The Huffpost* named her an "Agent of Change." Her other acting credits include Off-Broadway and national productions of *The Vagina Monologues* with Rita Moreno and Vicki Lawrence and roles in HBO's *Tracey Takes On...* and season 2 of *SENSE8* (Netflix.) Gomez also tours nationally as a stand-up comedian. She has appeared on Showtime's *Latino Laugh Festival*, and HBO's *Comic Relief* at the invitation of Robin Williams who called her “Amazing... a lesbian Lenny Bruce.” She is the winner of the 2017 “Best Of The Bay Comedian” reader’s poll from the *San Francisco Bay Guardian/48 Hills*. *SF Weekly* named Gomez one of “2016’s Artists To Watch.”

Carlos Caro (bongocero) is an award-winning percussionist, composer and educator from Havana, Cuba. He began his professional career playing with the well-known group Clave Cubana, and later toured with many respected Cuban musicians and ensembles including Opus 13, Paulo y la Elite, 40 Grados, Lay Ley and La Rumbantela, as well as performing with the Mexico City Philharmonic, Rebeca Mauleón, Omar Sosa, QBA, Eddie Palmieri, Armando Perazza, Jorge Santana & Malo, Ramon Romero and Cuerdas de Fuego, among others. He participated with Cuban singer Adonis Puentes at the Java Jazz Festival in Jakarta, Indonesia a few years ago. Carlos Caro has released two albums with his group Vission Latina and one with the sensational new VL Trio. He was a collaborator with Pacifico Mambo Orchestra on their Grammy Award winning eponymous album (Best Tropical Album, 2014).

Gary Graves (director) has been a resident playwright and company co-director at Central Works since 1998. He has been a part of developing 60 world premiere productions with the company, many of which he has either written and/or directed. He directed the company's first collaboratively developed script, *Roux*, at the City Club in 1997. Since 2002, he has taught playwriting year-round at the Berkeley Rep School of Theater. Currently, he leads the Central Works Writers Workshop, an ongoing commissioning program that develops new works and offers a variety of playwriting classes.

The full collaborative ensemble includes Marco Aponte, Tammy Berlin, Leticia Duarte, Cristina García, Elena Garrity, Marga Gomez, Gary Graves, Ben Ortega, Steve Ortiz, Vanessa Ramos, Gregory Scharpen, Debbie Shelley and Jan Zvaifler, with additional consulting by Zuzelín Martín and Achy Obejas.

Acting Ensemble

Marco Aponte (ensemble) made his Bay Area debut last year in the title role of *The House of Ramon Iglesia* (Bindlestiff Studio), and also appeared in *Partition* (Indra's Net). Prior stage credits include *A Game of Chess* and *The Day You'll Love Me*, both at Theatro Technis in London. He also performed in the London premiere of Mario Vargas Llosa's *La Chunga*. Marco is originally from Venezuela and trained at the HB Studio in New York, where he started acting in the 1990s. He lives in Berkeley and teaches at Saint Mary's College.

Leticia Duarte (ensemble) has last performed with Central Works in *Into the Beautiful North*. Other Bay Area credits include *Real Women Have Curves*, *Measure for Measure*, *Tartuffe*, *March*, *The Secretaries*, *Happy End*, *Dog Lady/Evening Star*, and *The Kentucky Cycle*. She has appeared in numerous commercial spots and industrials, and has provided voice-over talent on multiple projects. The highlight of Leticia's career, thus far, was performing at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2014. Leticia attended UCLA for her BA and the UCSC for her Masters, as well as Shakespeare and Company's Winter Conservatory, and ACT's Summer Training Congress.

Elaina Garrity (ensemble) is thrilled to make her Central Works debut. She is a Bay Area native from a Mexican-Irish family, graduated SFSU with honors, and focuses most of her time on film and commercial work. She was most recently seen on Lifetime in *Psycho Brother In-Law*, Graton Resorts commercials, and more tech industrials than she can count. The return to stage is sweet, sacred, and necessary. Favorite stage roles include *A Lie of the Mind* and *Buried Child* (Shelly, SFBATCC-nominated), both at The Magic Theater, and *References to Salvador Dalí* at SFSU.

Ben Ortega (ensemble) was last seen as Winston Smith in the Los Altos Stage production of Michael Gene Sullivan's adaptation of *1984*. Ben's favorite roles include Johnny in *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*, Felix Ungar in *The Odd Couple*, George Hay in *Moon Over Buffalo*, Picasso in *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, Yvan in *Art*, Daniel Kaffee in *A Few Good Men*, Verdecchia/Wideload in the one-man show *Fronteras Americanas*, Molina in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, Buddy in *Thunderbabe*, Allan Felix in *Play It Again, Sam*, and George in *Same Time, Next Year*. Ben studied acting at UCLA and privately with Lisa Chess. Ben is also a stand-up comedian and has performed in numerous clubs on both coasts.

Steve Ortiz (ensemble) received a BA in theater from San Francisco State University and attended the British American Drama Academy Graduate program in London. He has worked with the

Asian American Theater Company, the African American Shakespeare Company, The San Francisco Theatre Company, Thick Description, Luminarias, Darvag Theater, Teatro de la Esperanza, Teatro Campesino, Teatro Sabor, Teatro Vagon. Mr. Ortiz would like to give a shout out to Each One Reach One whose outreach program brings the skills of playwriting to at risk youth in the Bay Area's detention centers.

King of Cuba

A new comedy by Cristina García (based on her novel)

July 21 – Aug 19 (previews July 19 & 20)

Post-show talk-backs on Sun, July 22 & Aug 12

At: The Berkeley City Club, 2315 Durant Avenue, Berkeley.

Performances: Thurs, Fri & Sat at 8 pm, Sun at 5 pm

Ticket prices: \$22-\$38 online at centralworks.org, \$38-\$15 sliding scale at the door.

Previews and Thursdays: all available seats are pay-what-you-can at the door.

Tickets & info: 510.558.1381 or centralworks.org

For over 27 years Central Works has filled a special niche for theater artists in the San Francisco Bay Area, producing more new plays by local playwrights than any other company in the region. "The New Play Theater" utilizes three basic strategies: some are developed in the Central Works Writers Workshop, some are products of the Central Works Method, and some come to the company fully developed.

The Central Works Writers Workshop is an ongoing commissioning program established in 2012. Twice a year, in 12-week sessions, 8 local playwrights are selected to develop projects through informal readings and carefully directed discussions. For more information, visit our website: www.centralworks.org

Central Works Method plays bring together writer, actors and director at the very outset of the playwriting process. In a supportive workshop environment, group research and collective brainstorming contribute to the entire development of the script.

Central Works is also a member of the **National New Play Network (NNPN)**, and has participated in two Rolling World Premieres over the past two seasons.

Central Works 2018 Season will close with:

Chekhov's WARD 6

adapted by Gary Graves from the Chekhov novella

a classic tale of madness, alienation and moral responsibility

May 12 – Jun10

World Premiere #61: A Central Works Method Play

Performing at the Berkeley City Club 2315 Durant Avenue, Berkeley

Tickets: \$22 - \$38 online at centralworks.org or \$38 – \$15 sliding scale at the door.

Previews and Thursdays: available seats are pay-what-you-can at the door.

For more information call 510.558.1381 or visit <http://centralworks.org>

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