Dear Friends,

Summer around the Guthrie is a wonderful time. We celebrate the good weather by enjoying the farmers market and Gold Medal Park, and inside the theater we round out our season with the energy of two hugely entertaining shows. While an extraordinary cast and crew are doing stellar work on the Wurtele Thrust Stage, bringing to life Stephen Sondheim’s musical masterpiece *Sunday in the Park with George*, in the McGuire Proscenium Karen Zacarías’ incisive comedy *Native Gardens* is sure to get you thinking and, most of all, laughing.

Alongside her director Blake Robison, Karen has created a new play that hits on highly pertinent topics – generational and cultural divides, preconceived notions of the other – while managing to deliver those messages with great humor. In theater, and art in general, that is no easy feat. And as Karen often points out, laughter is at times the best way to lower our defenses and take a good, honest look at ourselves.

*Native Gardens* had its world premiere last year at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, where Blake is the artistic director, and it’s thrilling for us to have the opportunity to support this new work by giving the show a major production early in its life. The new play process – taking a script from ideation to the stage – is a long and collaborative one. And subsequent productions are oftentimes just as vital for a growing script as the premiere. On page 5, Blake offers us a fascinating window into the creative process behind bringing *Native Gardens* into the world.

We could not be more proud of the theater we produced and presented at the Guthrie throughout our 2016-2017 Season, nor more moved by the impact our programming, both educational and artistic, has had on our community. As we look toward an exciting new season, we want to extend to you our immense gratitude for being such a vital part of our Guthrie family. We can’t wait to see you next season!

Enjoy the show!

Yours,
The Guthrie gratefully recognizes the Weiser Family Foundation on behalf of Irving & Marjorie Weiser as Executive Producer, and Dr. Mitchell & Katherine Pincus, the Guthrie Corporate Council and the Guthrie Heritage Society as Producers of Native Gardens.

Setting
A wealthy neighborhood in the District of Columbia. Two backyard gardens.

Run Time
Approximately 1 hour, 30 minutes

Native Gardens is performed without an intermission

Landscape Technicians
Brandon J. Cayetano and Guillermo Zermeno

Acknowledgments
Native Gardens was originally produced by Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park
Blake Robison, Artistic Director
Buzz Ward, Managing Director

The Guthrie’s rush line is made possible with support from Target.

Delta Air Lines is the Official Airline of the Guthrie Theater.

Guthrie Theater
in association with
Arena Stage
presents

Native Gardens
by Karen Zacarías

Cast
in order of appearance

TANIA DEL VALLE
PABLO DEL VALLE
FRANK BUTLEY
VIRGINIA BUTLEY

SURVEYOR/
LANDSCAPE TECHNICIAN

BUILDING INSPECTOR/
LANDSCAPE TECHNICIAN/NANNY

Jacqueline Correa*
Dan Domingues*
Steve Hendrickson*
Sally Wingert*

Pedro Juan Fonseca
Reyna Rios

Creative Team

DIRECTOR
Blake Robison
Joseph Tilford
Kara Harmon
Xavier Pierce
Scott W. Edwards
Joe Payne
Jo Holcomb
Lucinda Holshue
Aaron Preusse
Michele Hossle*
Jason Clusman*
AnaSofía Villanueva

ALICE FREDRICKSON (costumes)
RYAN CONNEALY (lighting)
REID REJSA (sound associate)

INTERNS
Emily Gustafson (literary)
Wendy Unger (stage management)

*Member of Actors’ Equity Association
Pablo and Tania Del Valle are a young Latino couple who have recently relocated to an affluent Washington, D.C. neighborhood. Pablo is a rising attorney, and his very pregnant wife Tania is preparing to defend her doctoral dissertation. Their next-door neighbors, Virginia and Frank Butley, are welcoming but nervous about changes to their community. After the Del Valles reveal their plan to update their dilapidated house and yard, the Butleys eagerly offer their approval. Tania and Frank bond swiftly over their mutual love of gardening, though their styles are vastly different, with Frank preferring the traditional English garden and Tania advocating for native, local plants.

When Pablo, pressured to impress the partners at his new law firm, accidentally “volunteers” to host an office barbeque one weekend, the Del Valles work quickly to get their yard in shape. During the process of replacing their fence, they discover that their property line actually falls two feet into the middle of Frank’s prized garden. With both the barbeque and the neighborhood horticulture competition fast approaching, the couples have little time to settle the dispute before the fence must be installed. What begins as a property debate soon spirals into a comedic border dispute, exposing both couples’ notions of race, taste, class and privilege.

In Native Gardens, playwright Karen Zacarias successfully weaves pertinent societal issues into fast-paced, humorous dialogue. And, she’s managed to create four sympathetic characters: “Everybody has a heart. Nobody is trying to be mean. They’re all good Americans, just four different kinds of Americans.”
About the Playwright

Karen Zacarías was recently hailed by American Theatre magazine as one of the most produced playwrights in the United States.

Her plays include Destiny of Desire, Into the Beautiful North, Just Like Us, Mariela in the Desert, The Sins of Sor Juana, The Book Club Play, Legacy of Light and How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent. She also collaborated on the libretto for the ballets Sleepy Hollow and Hemingway: The Sun Also Rises for the Washington Ballet at the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. Her plays have been produced at The Kennedy Center, the Goodman Theater, South Coast Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse, RoundHouse Theater, GALA Hispanic Theater, Denver Theater Center, Dallas Theater Center and many more. Karen is a core founder of the Latinx Theater Commons, a national network that strives to update the American narrative to include Latinx stories. She is also the founder of Young Playwrights’ Theater, an award-winning theater company that teaches playwriting in public schools in Washington, D.C.

Writing is a choice. Even when I feel I’m going to burst if I don’t write, it is still a choice. Playwriting is the oddest of choices, because “success” is so ethereal and impossible. But as an extroverted writer, theatre was the one place where I could interact with the world and still write. So although a play may take forever (or never) to be produced, I get to interact and take pleasure in that world. I realize that the more I write, the less I live. But, oddly enough, the more I live, the more I can write. Since childhood, I have seen people become bitter because they have made big sacrifices and given everything to their art; and art (or any profession, no matter how passionate) will never give you everything back. I have tried to be really patient and realistic with our odd profession. I fight the “giving-up” demons by putting creative emphasis in a lot of other facets in my life – my family, my students and teaching, my grant writing, my bad cooking. Consequently, I am embarrassingly un-prolific, but, strangely enough, I have had the satisfaction of seeing every one of my plays publicly staged in one way or another.

Interview with Karen Zacarias, American Theatre, January 2006.

The greatest challenge facing me is the idea of not only staying true to your voice, but realizing when your voice starts to change as you grow older and new experiences emerge. I read a play that I wrote 10 years ago and I think, “Who is that?” Others read this play now and sometimes someone will say, “Oh, this is not what I expected from you, and yet I’m really happy that you did it.” I think allowing for this unpredictability and also allowing for the fact that we are not just one story, that there is not just one voice within us, is critical. Writing a play is like raising a child. Each play is really different and they may have different motivations and different aspirations. So, for me, there is the challenge as a writer of not whipping your children and, by avoiding that, allowing them to grow.

A Living, Changing New Play

by Blake Robison
Director

Director Blake Robison has been with Native Gardens since its inception – from its world premiere at his theater, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, to the Guthrie where our production will set the stage for the play’s ever-broadening life.

There are few things more satisfying than bringing a new play to life. Native Gardens grew from my longtime collaboration with playwright Karen Zacarías, and it’s been several years in the making.

Karen and I have worked together for a decade. I’ve had the honor to direct her hit comedy The Book Club Play as well as her adaptation of Julia Alvarez’s celebrated novel How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents. When I became artistic director of Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, we commissioned her to write a new play for an upcoming season. The first draft of Native Gardens arrived in my inbox in a rough, incomplete state. Phone conferences led to several readings and a workshop with professional actors, giving Karen the opportunity to hear voices, refine dialogue and complete the arc of the play. A year later, we decided to give it a go with a full production at the Playhouse – Native Gardens had its world premiere there in January 2016.

Writers will tell you that it takes several productions to finish the job on a play. A premiere is important, but subsequent productions are crucial to a script’s development. When Joe Haj offered to program the next major production of Native Gardens here at the Guthrie, Karen and I embraced the opportunity to continue working on the script together. There are no fewer than five productions of Native Gardens scheduled at large regional theaters in the coming season. The changes and refinements made during the Guthrie rehearsal process will inform them all. What you’re seeing today is the “final” script that will head out into the larger theatrical world.

What’s changed? Much more than you might imagine. Karen has tweaked the dialogue for rhythm and clarity. Scenes have been trimmed to streamline the action. Most importantly, she’s had the opportunity to see the play with multiple audiences. Comedy is a tricky thing; everyone has a different sense of humor. It’s even harder when your play takes on important societal issues like race, class and privilege – topics that are difficult to discuss even amongst close friends.

Karen’s gift is her ability to poke fun at life’s challenges, to invite us to examine ourselves before we judge others, and to do so in a thoroughly entertaining and big-hearted way. It’s up to you now. Your participation as an audience member completes the play’s journey. Thank you for being part of the process. We hope you enjoy the results!