

An Original Production and Los Angeles Premiere!

**Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán Returns to The Soraya
with a full-length “mariachi opera” —**

Cruzar la Cara de la Luna

**A story of immigration and family, created by the band’s former leader
José “Pepe” Martínez and Broadway’s Leonard Foglia**

Three performances only!

Friday, February 16 at 8:00pm

Saturday, February 17 at 8:00pm

Sunday, February 18 at 3:00pm

(Los Angeles, CA | December 22, 2017) The world’s first mariachi musical ***Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*** (*To Cross the Face of the Moon*) created by Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlan’s Jose “Pepe” Martinez and Broadway’s Leonard Foglia, will have its Los Angeles premiere at the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya) on Friday, February 16 at 8:00pm, Saturday, February 17 at 8:00pm and Sunday, February 18 at 3:00pm.

Performed in Spanish with projected English surtitles, *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* is epic journey told in song about lost loves divided by borders. Tackling a timely tale, the legendary Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlan combines the traditional music of Mexico with high drama to depict the cross-border story of two families and three generations.

Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlan’s late Music Director, José “Pepe” Martínez, composed the music, joining forces with noted director/writer Leonard Foglia to create this full-length mariachi musical, which was commissioned by and premiered at Houston Grand Opera in 2010.

Seven years later, its themes of human struggle are more relevant than ever. The Soraya now presents the Los Angeles premiere in an original production directed by Dan Guerrero – with Mariachi Vargas, now lead by music director Pepe Junior (son of Jose “Pepe”) making its fourth appearance at the venue. The Soraya’s new original production with an all-Los Angeles cast and creative team, follows successful performances in Chicago, San Diego and Paris.

The cast includes Daniel Rodriguez at Laurentino, Alba Franco-Cancel as Renata, Suzanna Guzman as Lupita and Natalia Ferreiro as Diana. The music producer is Suzan Garcia. *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* is produced by The Soraya under the direction of Thor Steingraber.

"The Soraya has become an important home for Latin and Mexican regional artists," said Steingraber. "And Spanish-speaking audiences of all generations celebrate their musical heritage at the Valley's premiere venue. No musical ensemble better quenches that thirst for authentic performance experiences than Mariachi Vargas, having sold-out three previous performances at The Soraya. And no performance in Los Angeles this year better exemplifies a commitment to reaching the city's Hispanic community."

Steingraber continued, "With twenty performances featuring artists from fourteen nations, the theme *Music Knows No Borders* continues to thrive in the 2017-18 season at The Soraya. *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* not only fulfills this mission in a musical sense, but the story itself is an emotional tale of migration and the competing identities we all possess."

"We are proud to create a new production of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, with director Dan Guerrero and musical director Jose "Pepe" Martinez Jr., son of the piece's composer. This is a passion project for Martinez and everyone involved," concluded Steingraber.

About *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*

Commissioned by Houston Grand Opera as part of the *Song of Houston: Mexico 2010* project that celebrated the anniversaries of the Mexican revolution and independence, *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* tells of the migration of a Mexican family and their journey to the United States, a journey of sacrifice and loss.

Cruzar la Cara de la Luna was composed by José "Pepe" Martínez, then music director of Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán – which enjoys an international reputation as the best and most influential mariachi band in the world. Martínez, who died in 2016, co-wrote the lyrics with Broadway director and playwright Leonard Foglia, who authored the book and directed the piece.

Cruzar is a story of a family divided and defined by the border they have crossed and re-crossed over several generations. Laurentino, an octogenarian Mexican laborer, lies dying in his Houston home, surrounded by his current family, but remembering and longing for the family he left behind and lost many years before. The memory of his beloved wife, Renata, who attempting to cross the border, fills his mind, and the musical proceeds in fluid shifts between past and present, English and Spanish, Mexico and Texas.

Laurentino's families and memories come together in a rich, vibrant mariachi score. The title poetically refers to the annual Mexican migration of monarch butterflies, as Laurentino longs to once more see the butterflies' nighttime crossing over the moon.

Reviewing the Paris premiere (September 2011), *Classical TV Paris* reported, "At the end of this moving work, Théâtre du Châtelet shook with applause. You could hear weeping, but most of all you heard shouts of joy at the discovery of something wonderful and fresh."

The *Chicago Tribune* said of the music, "These oh-so-catchy melodies range from wistful ballads to lilting waltzes to jazzy *joropos*, all spiced by the alluring rhythms and simple harmonies of Martínez's brilliant mariachi musicians. Rather than sitting decoratively atop the storyline, these tunes speed it along, adding their own emotional dimensions along the way."

The *Houston Chronicle* adds "not only is [the music] suave and melodious, but its almost unceasing glow reaches into the souls of the characters. Martínez and Foglia - who was also the stage director – have crafted a concise, fast-moving story."

About Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán

Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán has toured the world and shared its music with people of all cultures on its more than 800 recordings. It was founded in 1898 by Gaspar Vargas in Tecalitlán, Jalisco, and is considered the most important and influential group in the history of the genre, playing an integral role in the evolution of the Mariachi music.

In the 1930s, its leadership was taken over by Silvestre Vargas, son of Gaspar; Silvestre Vargas and Ruben Fuentes, the first trained musician ever to direct the ensemble, led Mariachi Vargas into the modern era of films, recordings, and broadcasts. Among the prominent musicians who have worked with Mariachi Vargas in the ensuing decades were Pedro Infante, Miguel Aceves Mejia, Lola Beltrán, and José Alfredo Jimenez.

From 1975 to 2014, Mariachi Vargas' music director was José "Pepe" Martínez. He passed away in 2016 at the age of 74. Now the ensemble is under the direction of Carlos Martínez, Pepe Martínez's uncle.

About Leonard Foglia

Theater and opera director and librettist Leonard Foglia has had his work seen on Broadway, across the country, and internationally. Recently, he directed two world premieres: Joby Talbot's *Everest* at the Dallas Opera and Jennifer Higdon's *Cold Mountain* at Santa Fe Opera.

As a director, his opera credits include the premieres of three operas by Jake Heggie: *Moby-Dick* (Dallas Opera, San Diego Opera, Calgary Opera, Opera of South Australia, San Francisco Opera, where it was filmed for PBS' *Great Performances*, and Washington National Opera), *Three Decembers* (Houston Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago), and *The End of the Affair* (HGO, Madison, Seattle). His production of Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* has been seen across the country. His theater credits include the original Broadway productions of *Master Class*, *Thurgood* and *The People in the Picture*, as well as the revivals of *Wait Until Dark* and *On Golden Pond*. He directed Anna Deavere Smith's *Let Me Down Easy* Off-Broadway and on tour.

About The Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya)

The Soraya opened its 2017-2018 season on September 16 with a performance of *AMADEUS Live* (Milos Foreman's 1984 Academy Award-winning Best Picture with live orchestra) with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and members of the LA Opera Chorus. The evening honored the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Foundation in recognition of the family's recent \$17 million gift that will rename VPAC as the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Performing Arts Center, known as The Soraya. The gift is one of the largest in the history of the California State University and the system's largest single gift to support the arts; gift to support the programming and operations of the award-winning Valley Performing Arts Center – which has become one of the cultural jewels of the region in the six years since it opened.

The 2017-18 Soraya season signals a new era for the premier event venue. Under the leadership of Executive Director Thor Steingraber, the renamed Younes and Soraya Nazarian Performing Arts Center expands its programming and outstanding multidisciplinary performances. The mission of The Soraya is to present a wide variety of performances that not only includes new and original work from the Los Angeles region but also work from around the world that appeal to all of LA's rich and diverse communities. Located on the campus of California State University, Northridge, The Soraya's season offers a vibrant performance program of nearly 50 classical and popular music, dance, theater, family and international events that will serve to establish The Soraya as the intellectual and cultural heart of the San Fernando Valley, and further establish itself as one of the top arts companies in Southern California. The award-winning, 1,700-seat theatre was designed by HGA Architects and Engineers and was recently cited by the Los Angeles Times as "a growing hub for live music, dance, drama and other cultural events."

Calendar Listing for *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*

Date: Friday, February 16 at 8:00pm
Saturday, February 17 at 8:00pm
Sunday, February 18 at 3:00pm

Venue: The Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya)
18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330

Tickets: **Prices** Starting at \$43. Prices subject to change.
By Phone (818) 677-3000
Online ValleyPerformingArtsCenter.org

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