

CENTER REPERTORY COMPANY PRESENTS
THE LEGEND OF GEORGIA MCBRIDE

By Matthew López

Directed by Elizabeth Carter

November 4-26, 2023 (opening night: November 7)

LESHER CENTER FOR THE ARTS, WALNUT CREEK

WALNUT CREEK, CA (20 September 2023) — **Center Repertory Company** will present *The Legend of Georgia McBride*, written by Tony and Olivier Award winner **Matthew López** (*The Inheritance*, *The Whipping Man*, *Somewhere*, the book of the Broadway musical *Some Like it Hot*, and Amazon Studios' *Red, White & Royal Blue*). Casey is an Elvis impersonator with everything going for him, including a flashy sequin jumpsuit. But after he loses his gig, rent is overdue, and his wife announces a baby on the way, Elvis leaves the building and a drag show moves in. With the help of some new friends who become the chosen family Casey never saw coming, “The King” transforms into an all-out queen. Directed by acclaimed Bay Area actor/director **Elizabeth Carter**, who returns to Center REP after helming last season’s *SWEAT*, *The Legend of Georgia McBride* is filled with snappy zingers and dance-worthy numbers. *The Legend of Georgia McBride* will perform **November 4-26, 2023** at the Leshher Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr, Walnut Creek. For tickets (\$45-\$70) and more information, the public may visit **LeshherArtsCenter.org** or call the box office at **(925) 943-7469** (open Wed-Sun, 12:00pm-6:00pm).

Center REP offers Pay What You Can tickets (suggested price of \$25) for the November 4 & 5 preview performances of *The Legend of Georgia McBride*, increasing access to theatre and inviting audiences to see the show at whatever price they can afford. ASL interpretation for deaf and hard of hearing patrons is offered at the 2:30 pm performance on Saturday, November 25, 2023.

Making its World Premiere at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts before premiering in New York at the Lucille Lortel Theatre, *The New York Times* deemed the play “stitch-in-your-side funny...full of sass and good spirits.” *The New York Daily News* calls it an “irresistible crowd pleaser...chasing buzzy themes of identity and transformation, *Georgia McBride* is by turns sweet and salty and deceptively deep... Lopez's play confirms his status as a writer worth hearing from.”

Director Carter has assembled a talented cast to bring this play to life. Seen in Center REP's *The Diary of Anne Frank*, **Joe Ayers** returns as Casey, a charismatic Elvis impersonator who transforms into a drag queen. Ayers has also worked with California Shakespeare Theater, Asolo Repertory Theatre, American Conservatory Theater, American Stage Theatre Company, San Francisco Playhouse, Los Altos Stage Company, PlayGround, Alonzo King LINES Ballet, Contra Costa Musical Theatre, Berkeley Playhouse, and New Canon Theatre Company.

J.A. Valentine makes his Center REP debut as Miss Tracy Mills, a gifted and seasoned drag queen who becomes a drag mother to Casey. He has appeared at Ray of Light Theatre, San Jose Stage Company, Broadway By the Bay, Shotgun Players, Custom Made Theatre Company, Cutting Ball Theater, Theatre Rhinoceros, Oregon Cabaret Theatre, Thrillpeddlers, and The Oasis. He can be seen in Darcy Drollinger's feature film *Shit and Champagne* and its upcoming sequel *Lady Champagne*.

Sundiata Ayinde makes her Center REP debut as Jo, Casey's wife who is a grounded realist. She has performed with Shotgun Players, California Shakespeare Theater, Town Hall Theatre, and Oakland Theater Project.

Alan Coyne makes his Center REP debut as Eddie, the owner of Cleo's bar. Coyne previously acted with San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, We Players, Central Works, and Town Hall Theatre. He performed in *2ELFth Night* at Edinburgh Fringe.

Jed Pasario makes his Center REP debut as Rexy, a fiery and sharp-tongued drag queen, and Jason, Casey and Jo's high school friend and landlord. He has performed with American Conservatory Theater, SF Mime Troupe, Shotgun Players, TheatreFirst, and SPARC Theater. Pasario is a company member of PlayGround and Red Ladder Theatre Company, a resident artist of Bindlestiff Studio, and a collective member of Analog Theatre.

The Legend of Georgia McBride features scenic design by **Kelly James Tighe**, costume design by **Becky Bodurtha**, sound design by **Jake Rodriguez**, lighting design by **Aaron Spivey**, and props design by **Alyssa Tryon**. **Kimily Conkle** serves as dialect coach, **Jeuneé Simon** leads intimacy direction/cultural competency, and **Chris Steele** as drag consultant.

Matthew López (Playwright) is an American playwright and screenwriter. His play *The Inheritance* swept the “Best Play” awards in both London and New York, including the Tony Award, Olivier Award, Drama Desk Award, Evening Standard Award, London Critics Circle Award, Outer Critics Circle Honors, Drama League Award, and GLAAD Media Award. He is the first Latine writer to win the Tony Award for Best Play. In 2023, López received a second Tony Award nomination for co-writing the musical adaptation of the classic film *Some Like it Hot*, with Amber Ruffin. López’s *The Whipping Man* and *The Legend of Georgia McBride* have been seen Off-Broadway. Other works include *Somewhere Reverberation*, *The Sentinel*, and *Zoey’s Perfect Wedding*. This summer, López made his directorial feature debut with the LGBTQ+ romantic comedy *Red, White & Royal Blue* for Amazon Studios. In addition to directing the film, Matthew adapted the script, based on Casey McQuiston’s bestselling novel. López is also working on a reimaging of the iconic 1992 Whitney Houston box office hit *The Bodyguard* for Warner Bros, as well as a feature film adaptation of the novel *Leading Men* for Searchlight Pictures, which centers on Tennessee Williams and his longtime partner Frank Merlo. In October 2020, he signed an overall television development deal with Amazon Studios.

Elizabeth Carter (Director) returns to Center REP after directing *SWEAT*. Most recently she directed *Wolf Play* for Shotgun Players. Her recent regional directing credits also include *Confederates* for St. Louis Repertory Theatre; *Steel Magnolias* for TheatreWorks Silicon Valley; *Every 28 Hours Plays* and *A Place to Belong* for American Conservatory Theater; *Stoop Stories* for Aurora Theatre Company. She served as associate director on *the ripple the wave that carried me home* for Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Goodman Theatre and assistant director for *How I Learned What I Learned* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. She directed the groundbreaking 2020 virtual *King Lear* for SF Shakespeare Festival as well as *Feel the Spirit* for Shotgun Players and Colt Couer. Her directorial film debut *Bottled Spirits* will be seen this fall at the London Pan African Film Festival. She is a recipient of the Bridging the Gap Grant and is a 2019 alum of Director’s Lab West. Carter was the inaugural SDCF Lloyd Richards New Futures Resident Director at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and a 2023 Lucas Arts Fellow.

About Center Repertory Company

Led by Artistic Director **Matt M. Morrow**, **Center REP** is the resident professional theatre company of the Leshner Center for the Arts. Its season consists of six productions—a variety of classic and contemporary musicals, dramas, and comedies, presented with artistic excellence and high professional standards. Center REP’s mission is to celebrate the power of the human imagination by producing

emotionally engaging, intellectually involving, and visually astonishing live theatre, and through Outreach and Education programs, to enrich and advance the cultural life of the communities it serves. As a producing theatre, its presentations are conceived and developed at the Leshner Center. Whether the production is a Bay Area premiere or a Shakespearean classic, each is devised to be a one-of-a-kind, artistic creation offering a unique theatre experience for audiences.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: Center Repertory Company will present *The Legend of Georgia McBride*, written by Tony and Olivier Award winner **Matthew López** (*The Inheritance*, *The Whipping Man*, *Somewhere*, the book of the Broadway musical *Some Like it Hot*, and Amazon Studios' *Red, White & Royal Blue*). Casey is an Elvis impersonator with everything going for him, including a flashy sequin jumpsuit. But after he loses his gig, rent is overdue, and his wife announces a baby on the way, Elvis leaves the building and a drag show moves in. With the help of some new friends who become the chosen family Casey never saw coming, "The King" transforms into an all-out queen. Directed by acclaimed Bay Area actor/director **Elizabeth Carter**, *The Legend of Georgia McBride* is filled with snappy zingers and dance-worthy numbers. *The New York Times* deemed the play "stitch-in-your-side funny... full of sass and good spirits." *The New York Daily News* calls it an "irresistible crowd pleaser... chasing buzzy themes of identity and transformation, *Georgia McBride* is by turns sweet and salty and deceptively deep... Lopez's play confirms his status as a writer worth hearing from."

WHEN: Previews: Saturday, November 4 – Sunday, November 5, 2023
Opening: Tuesday, November 7, 2023
Closing: Sunday, November 26, 2023

ASL interpreted performance: 2:30pm Saturday, November 25, 2023

SHOWS: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays: 7:30pm
Saturdays: 2:30pm & 7:30pm
Sundays: 2:30pm & 7:00pm

WHERE: Leshner Center for the Arts (1601 Civic Dr, Walnut Creek)

TICKETS: For tickets (\$45-\$70) or more information, the public may visit lesherartscenter.org or call the box office at (925) 943-7469 (*open Wed-Sun, 12:00pm-6:00pm*).

Pay What You Can tickets (suggested price of \$25) are available for performances on November 4&5, 2023.

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PRESS: Contact Lauren Goldfarb, Carla Befera & Co.

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available: <https://cbpr.co/press/georgiamcbride/>