

THE HARC FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 2010 TRUMPET AWARD TO LEO GARCIA, HIGHWAYS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



LOS ANGELES (October 30, 2010) – The HARC Foundation has announced that Leo Garcia is the recipient of the 2010 TRUMPET AWARD, a special recognition award presented periodically by The HARC Foundation as determined appropriate by The Board of Directors. These awards are granted to Creative Artists who have made outstanding contributions to the Arts and to the Community. Leo Garcia is a multi-talented award-winning playwright, actor, filmmaker, producer, teacher, and activist and has served as Highways Performance Space’s Artistic Director since 2003 where he has developed and presented over 500 performance works. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Virginia Commonwealth University followed by a yearlong apprenticeship at Actor’s Theatre of Louisville. He received his Master of Fine Arts degree from the Asolo Conservatory in Sarasota, Florida.

As a playwright, Garcia has chronicled his family’s genealogy, ten-generations of New Mexican family history, in his cycle of plays entitled *The Abduction of Hernan Cortes: The New Mexico Cycle*. The cycle explores the themes of abduction: of land, of self, and of alien abduction, and follows the lives of five New Mexican families from 1598 to present. Garcia’s plays have won awards from The National Endowment for the Arts, Theatre Communications Group, New York Foundation for the Arts, Mark Taper Forum, South Coast Repertory, The National Hispanic Media Coalition, and MCA/Universal. His works have been presented by numerous nationally-established companies and presenters, including New York’s Theater for the New City, The New York Shakespeare Public Festival, The Jewish Repertory Theatre, International Arts Relations Theatre (INTAR), The Los Angeles Theater Center, The South Coast Repertory Theatre, The Tiffany Theatre, and Santa Fe Stages, among many others.

As a young person, Garcia was influenced by the presentational, didactic, agitprop plays he discovered in a little red book of “actos” by El Teatro Campesino and was inspired by the hopes and optimism he witnessed in Shirley Temple films. He was often at odds with the extremes of his interest. On one hand, he sought to dramatize the sociopolitical, material, and cultural issues of the exploited, and on the other hand, he hoped to sing and tap his way to Hollywood stardom. Garcia began his social activism at age sixteen, when his father sent him to work as an apprentice recruiter for a federal program funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity. Garcia’s job was to assist in the recruitment of high school aged children of agricultural workers from the rural communities of Colorado and to orient them to the real possibilities of achieving higher education.

Garcia continued his community service through his high school and early undergraduate years and came to believe that the spirit of service is not only an asset, but also a requirement. Though inclined to pursue a career in the social sciences, Garcia never forgot the impact that the works of El Teatro Campesino had on him nor did he forget his joy in the magic of Hollywood. As Garcia navigated through college, he pursued the theatre as a way of having it all, a form of a political and social education, he thought, as well as a theatrical one. This mix of influences created a syncretism that satisfied his needs.

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After receiving his MFA, Garcia moved to New York City where he worked as an actor and playwright. His thesis project, a play about the relationship between Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb and their psychological crime was optioned for a workshop at the Jewish Repertory Theatre in New York City. That same play was submitted to internationally acclaimed playwright and director Maria Irene Fornes for consideration as playwright in residence at the International Arts Relations Theatre (INTAR), where Garcia served five residencies under the direction of Ms. Fornes. Garcia worked for many years with his mentor Ms. Fornes, as writer and actor and has been directed by her in her plays in New York, Los Angeles and Siena, Italy at the Dionysia World Festival. Fornes also directed Garcia's play, "Dogs," at West Coast Ensemble Theater in Los Angeles. While in New York, Garcia also pursued his career as an actor. He has appeared in over 30 off-Broadway and regional theatre productions. While in New York, Garcia also hosted the Emmy nominated NBC Special, Another American.

Garcia's television work brought him to Los Angeles, where he guest starred in episodic television and was a regular on a daytime drama series. As a filmmaker, his film, "A Rainy Day," was distributed by Universal Television and was shown in festivals nationally and internationally. While in Los Angeles, he served as an artist, teacher, director and producer for numerous productions and classes at Highways Performance Space; resident playwright with the Mark Taper Forum's Latino Theatre Initiative; and project artistic director and playwright with the community-based San Diego Playwrights Project. Garcia has also been a fixture on the Los Angeles alternative performing arts scene for many years, one of a handful of artists who represent a fully developed, professional approach to multidisciplinary work. Out Magazine recognized Garcia as one of the OUT 100 of 2005, a list of the year's most interesting, influential, and newsworthy LGBT people as a result of his many contributions to the arts as well as his indefatigable activism on behalf of alternative artists and the alternative arts community through the support and presentation of their performance works and in service to the community at large. The HARC Foundation considers it a great privilege to recognize and honor Leo Garcia for his unique and extraordinary contributions to the Arts and to humanity.