A Karen Zacarías Play
Directed by Mark Cosdon

Buenas Cercas hacen buenos vecinos.

Good fences make good neighbors.

— Robert Frost

Native Gardens

Saturday, May 1, 2021 • 2 pm & 6 pm
Sunday, May 2, 2021 • 2 pm

Vukovich Center for Communication Arts
Outside Courtyard

Tickets
Box Office: (814) 332-3414
allegheny.edu/playshop
NATIVE GARDENS

by Karen Zacarías

Directed by Mark Cosdon

NATIVE GARDENS was commissioned and first produced by Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park under Blake Robison (Artistic Director) and Buzz Ward (Managing Director).

Cast

Tania Del Valle - Kyrié Doniz
Pablo Del Valle - Thión Lee
Virginia Butley - Karen Gauriloff
Frank Butley - Alexander Le Floch
Surveyor/Landscaper - Safiatou Compaore
Inspector/Landscaper - Annika Hansen
Landscaper - Jonathan Brodak
Landscaper - Scott Major

THE VIDEOTAPING OR OTHER VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDINGS OF THIS PRODUCTION IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.
PRODUCTION STAFF

Scenic Designer          LeeAnn Yeckley
Costumer                Miriam Patterson
Technical Director      LeeAnn Yeckley
Assistant Technical Director Heather Curtis
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Consultant Itzel Ayala
Stage Manager           Tully Taylor
Assistant Stage Manager Jillian Bradley
Dramaturg               Kimberlyn Rybak
Sound Designers         Heather Curtis and Scott Major
Sound Board Operator    Hannah Schultz
Wardrobe Crew           Olivia O'Neill, Sasha Holguin
Run Crew                Madeline Segar
Poster Design           The Office of College Relations

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Culture, Identity, & Leadership Coalition (CILC)
Penny Drexel, Office of College Relations
Stephanie Engel ‘16
Vincent Fallara, Edinboro University
Teresa Herrera-De La Muela, Barbara Riess, & Rosita Scerbo, Dept. of World Languages and Cultures
Shannan Mattiace, Dept. of Political Science
Angelica Perez-Johnston, IDEAS Center
Union LatinX, Allegheny College
Beth Watkins, Dept. of Communication, Film, and Theatre

“Native Gardens” is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com
A Note from Dramaturg Kimberlyn Rybak

“One life for so many.”
With these seemingly innocent words, playwright Karen Zacarías marks a turning point in her play: the beginning of a comical and, at times, scathing extended metaphor for the way that native and non-native identities are defined, realized, and valued. Now frequently produced and celebrated for her work, Zacarías is the Resident Playwright at Washington, D.C.’s Arena Stage and has spent time sharing her skills both as a professor at Georgetown and as the founder of Young Playwrights’ Theater, a company dedicated to teaching interested students in public schools across D.C.

Zacarías has revealed that Native Gardens took root in her mind after a dinner party at which her friends began to discuss their neighbors and the domestic quarrels that each had endured and experienced. Zacarías noted, “...what struck me about them was both the passion and absurdity around these stories, that they got very big very quickly, and contentious, and how everyone regretted that it had gotten like that.” She then began to write a play that addressed much bigger concerns, including race, identity, property, and ownership. By interweaving comedy, gardening tips, and harsh allusions to real-life political power plays, Zacarías offers a way for audiences to engage with her work in and out of the theater space.

“Native Plant: A plant that is a part of the balance of nature that has developed over hundreds or thousands of years in a particular region or ecosystem... Only plants found in this country before European settlement are considered to be native to the United States.”
The USDA defines native and non-native plants not by their origins, but by their potential as contributors to the ecosystem. For many plants, the process of achieving full potential as a host for bugs, birds, and pollinators is a process that takes so long that most native plants are coincidentally those that originated in their present habitats. Non-native plants, on the other hand, are newer to the environment, often ornamental, and at best contribute very little to their adopted ecosystems. At worst, these plants become invasive, stealing nutrients and space from the native plants that support life. Bugs die out, birds starve, neighboring plants are no longer pollinated, and the sprawling green lawns that are so traditionally valued by Americans overtake the biodiversity of a region’s ecosystem. These concepts are not theoretical or adapted to meet the needs of Zacarías’ subtle commentary on origins and identity, nor is it coincidental that the oak tree, the pride and joy of the Del Valle yard, is one of the top ideal native plants in North America (able to support a documented 534 species of caterpillars).

When Zacarías writes “one life for so many,” she draws attention to both the social and ecological implications of finding value in a life. Which lives (be they plant, animal, or human) are valuable and why? Where is the line drawn between native, non-native, and invasive species that poses a risk to the biodiversity and survival of a society or ecosystem? These are hard questions to answer, but questions that the dedicated cast of Playshop’s Native Gardens will no doubt shed light and laughter on as they perform the lives of two couples: neither irredeemable, both eager to communicate and contribute to the building of a better garden and a better world.
Playshop Theatre Staff

Managing Director: Mark Cosdon
Resident Directors: Mark Cosdon, Beth Watkins
Production Manager: LeeAnn Yeckley
Resident Designers: Michael Mehler, Miriam Patterson
Technical Director: LeeAnn Yeckley
Asst. Technical Director: Heather Curtis
Box Office Manager: Lynette Passilla

Playshop Student Assistants

Assistant Production Manager: Brittany Joseph
Lead Technicians: Samantha Bender, Amir Megherhi, Noah Stape, Rielly Steuernagel, Alayna Willow
Production Technicians: Makenna Graham, Sasha Holguin, Sabrina Mullen, Sydnie Patton-Neil, Oscar Spiker, Damaris Rodriguez
Costume Technicians: Luis Mendoza, Kaleel Von Voorhees, Kaleigh White, Vanessa Kocher, Alex Martin, Bella Watts, Olivia O’Neill, Rhiannon VanDee, Kimberlyn Rybak, David Swett

House Managers: Thomas Beblo
Photographer: Mary Dosch
Welcome!

The Department of Communication, Film, and Theatre is thrilled to announce that kt shorb will join the faculty this coming fall! Professor shorb comes to us from the University of Texas where they are completing a Ph.D. in the Performance as Public Practice program. Their research focuses on how queer people of color performers create temporal pockets that can only be described as time travel. In Austin, Professor shorb is the producing artistic director of the Generic Ensemble Company, an ensemble that makes the invisible visible through bold, socially relevant, body-centered theatre. Professor shorb also holds a B.M. in Composition from Oberlin Conservatory of Music and an M.A. in Radio-Televison-Film from The University of Texas at Austin.

We are also quite excited that Terrence Spivey will be joining the faculty for the fall 2021 semester. Professor Spivey will teach fall’s THTR 190 – “The Evolving Karamu House and Social Justice” A study of Black theatre and drama through the evolution of Cleveland’s Karamu House from the civil rights movement through the Black Arts Movement to today. Students investigate documentary plays on social justice and racial identities from Tamir Rice to Michael Brown. Artists including Charles Gilpin, Langston Hughes, Amiri Baraka, and Dael Orlandersmith are considered.

Professor Spivey will also direct a November 2021 Playshop production.

After graduating from Texas's Prairie View A&M University, Terrence Spivey moved to New York City and studied the Meisner Technique at the William Esper Studio. Following stints at the Black Writers Reunion and Conference and the Black Girl Ensemble, in 2003 Spivey became artistic director of Cleveland’s historic Karamu House, the nation’s oldest African American theatre. Across 13 years Spivey directed many world premieres and produced countless community initiatives, gaining numerous accolades for Karamu House such as the 2013 AUCELCO Repertory Company of the Year in New York City. After departing Karamu House, he worked as a freelance director creating new works on the police killing of Tamir Rice and sex trafficking in Northeast Ohio, in addition to directing plays by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins and August Wilson. Spivey also founded his own theatre company, Powerful Long Ladder, directing works by James Baldwin and Golden Globe actress Regina Taylor. He recently directed an award-winning film called *Resurrection of The Last Black Man in 08:46*, a reflection on the killing of George Floyd and a 1933 Texas lynching. In 2018 Spivey was selected into The HistoryMakers. It is the largest archive collection for African Americans housed in the Library of Congress.
A Tribute to Beth!

After 35 years at Allegheny College, Beth Watkins will retire at the end of this semester. Beth has touched so many lives at Allegheny and across Meadville. She will be deeply missed. Here, a handful of her former collaborators and colleagues offer a few words to honor this extraordinary person.

W. Scott Choffel, Former Technical Director, Playshop Theatre
Cinders...I know what I said after strike, but for you I’d do it again. You always had the vision.

Mark Cosdon, Professor of Theatre
I never had the opportunity to study with Beth, but she is a powerful teacher and artist. Over the years, I’ve learned so much from Beth’s transformative mentoring. I’ve marveled over the magic she’s created in the Playshop, using stage space in ways I could never conceive. I often think of the devised pieces she’s created alongside so many community and Allegheny partners. Yet, perhaps best of all are those times when I pass Beth’s office and see her and a student director hovering over a video recorder reviewing the nascent work of this emerging artist. Beth’s focus, her passion for the performing arts, her infectious laugh, and the shared process of creation are truly inspiring.

In 2002, I flew into Erie for my Allegheny interview. Beth picked me up and in the backseat of the car was one of her children. On our drive to Meadville, Beth and I talked about the theatre, how to shape a department, and maintaining a balance between work and our personal lives. I knew immediately she was a person whom I wanted to work alongside. Beth will be missed immensely!

Dan Crozier, Professor Emeritus
Summa Cum Laude - In Praise of Beth Watkins
What can you say about Beth Watkins? She’s the Best, and I’ll tell you why. Her heart’s in the right place, her mind, incisive and sublime. My favorite teacher of all time. She’s created true beauty and wonder on the stage, in the classroom, and in each of our lives. Morality, integrity, honest to God Wisdom! I never met such a clear thinker. This is what I’m talking about. Kind, Considerate, Humble, Courageous, Vulnerable, Funny, Straight Forward. Beth has had a profoundly deep and brilliant impact on our department, our students, and the college itself. We have all been so lucky to work with her, we all know this. She has made us better thinkers, better teachers, better people. Never had a mentor til I met her. Beth has taught and inspired every one of us. She is the pole star, true north, she talks the talk and walks the walk. She’s the real thing.

Beth Watkins? The Best. The Best ever!

Todd J. Fox, Development Office and Meadville, Community Theatre
Beth always challenged me as an actor. It was thrilling working with her to make stage magic. But only a true friend would eat lunch with me on my porch in the middle of January in the middle of a pandemic. Thank you, Beth, for having faith in me and for your unwavering friendship.
**Heather Curtis, Assistant Technical Director, Playshop Theatre**

On my first day of work in 2015, Beth Watkins introduced herself to me with a tour of the Gladys Mullenix Black Theatre. She opened the door to the theatre and realized that the Ghostlight was off and proceeded to tell me the history of how the Ghostlight came to be. Which by chance happen to be the name of her play and my introduction into the theatre world. Over the next six years, I came to enjoy her creativity and fluidity with regards to collaboration and her insight into how she interprets playwrights and her own devising process when approaching topics of thought and meaning. Her ability to capture whimsical charm with her puppetry has allowed the audience to be teleported into another world and has allowed me to witness another form of storytelling that I never experienced. She is a caring and compassionate instructor and coworker who takes the time to listen and allows you the opportunity to grow in your own craft. I will miss her. Happy retirement Beth.

**Mike Keeley, Professor of Film and Video Production**

I first met Beth in May of 1987 when I came for my interview at Allegheny College. Luckily, I got the job and returned to campus in August of that year. Beth and I have been friends ever since. There have been a lot of changes here during the last 34 years but the one constant I could always count on was Beth. I can't imagine how I would have survived here without her advice, support, and laughter. I've been dreading this moment ever since she told me this was going to be her last semester here and have been struggling to find just the right words to express how much her friendship has meant to me. So from the bottom of my heart, and with all of the passion that hopefully comes across in words written in all caps, here they are...... PLEASE DON'T GO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Love, Mike

**Michael Mehler, Professor of Theatre**

When deciding whether or not to return to Allegheny, at the top of my pro list was the chance to work with Beth again. There has never been a director with whom the creative process was so engaging, the interpersonal dynamics so respectful and fulfilling, and the final product so compelling an experience for the audience. On top of being a wonderful collaborator, Beth has been a dear friend and mentor and in many ways the heart of the Playshop Theatre.

**Miriam Patterson, Designer and Costume Shop Supervisor**

Working with Beth has been one of my favorite collaborations as a costume designer. It is such a joy to work with a director who is so thorough and thoughtful in her approach to her work. And participating in the development of a devised show with Beth has been one of the particular highlights of my time at Allegheny. I learned so much from the process of engaging with the ensemble of what would become Mortified. The experience was enriching and rewarding, and it provided me with a unique and interesting viewpoint from which to think about my own design work. Thank you Beth for welcoming me into that process and into every creative project we have gotten to do together.

**Vesta Silva, Professor of Communication Arts**

It’s difficult to anticipate most people’s reactions when you tell them that you are having your knee rebuilt with ligaments donated from a cadaver, but as soon as I learned that I would in fact be having that surgery, I knew that Beth Watkins would find it as amazing and wonderful as I did. That's just the type of person she is. Over the last 17 years, we have had fascinating conversations about everything from the memoir The Glass Castle to the tragic story of David Reimer, to the science of decomposing corpses at the Body Farm in Tennessee. In between such discussions she has counseled me in challenging times, encouraged me when I was feeling uncertain, and celebrated my achievements with me. She has made me a better teacher and a better person, and I am proud to have her as my friend. The elevator ride to class will feel very lonely without her to share it with.

Have a wonderful retirement and I look forward to all our conversations to come.
Betsy Sumerfield, Director of Dance and Movement Studies Program
Beth, to work with you is:
to learn from,
be challenged by,
be uplifted by,
be expanded by,
be inspired by,
be enriched by,
to go on an adventure with,
to find inspiration from,
to be humbled by,
and to become friends with
You.
Thank you for this part of the journey. Above all I appreciate the personal support and friendship (this part is NOT retiring.) Perhaps now we can find time for tea more often.

Brian Thummler - Artist, Musician, and Teacher
Years ago, I glommed onto Beth as if to something wild,
She an ardent Venus and me a marred child.
With nurturing guidance my skills she would hone,
While demanding puppets, she worked my fingers to the bone.
Or she’d shout, “You’re the pianist,” though it made her shirty,
When she heard that my playing was rather down and dirty.
Years later, she haunted my dreams at night,
Less an inspiring spark and more a dying of the light.
Then I saw my best hopes as a pianist shrivel,
Our war of wills becoming less than civil.
She left me burned out, is that better than rust?
What I thought she might hone had been stomped into dust.
Yet, I cling to one hope: There is life after death,
To resurrect what remains and once again work with Beth.

LeeAnn Yeckley, Technical Director, Playshop Theatre
My first introduction to the Allegheny College Theatre department and the Playshop Theatre came via Beth Watkins, who gave me her time and a tour of the facilities shortly after I moved to town. As luck would have it, the opportunity to work with her and the other fine folks at Allegheny College’s Playshop Theatre presented itself shortly thereafter. It is a great sorrow to me that I only had 3 years to work with this kind, compassionate, generous, and creative artist and educator. Working with Beth Watkins was always a pleasure and an opportunity to grow in my own work and I will miss her greatly. My very best to you, Beth! Thank you.