



NEWS RELEASE

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'Latina Christmas Special' brings holiday joy and laughs to NYC

Performances begin Friday, Dec. 13; Opening is Wednesday, Dec. 18 at SoHo Playhouse

NEW YORK CITY (Sept. 25, 2019) — An American comedy of Latina proportions! Bursting with laughs, more laughs, music and *escándalo* (scandal), **Latina Christmas Special**, written and performed by acclaimed comedians **Diana Yanez**, **Maria Russell** and **Sandra Valls** and directed by **Geoffrey Rivas**, makes its **NYC debut** at the **SoHo Playhouse** for a four-week run beginning **Dec. 13**.

You thought your holidays with the family were dramatic? Try these three hilarious, touching and surprisingly personal Christmas stories of holidays past told by three first-generation Latina comedians: the Miami-born, Cuban-American Yanez (Margaret Cho's *The Sensuous Woman*); the half Mexican-half Lithuanian California native Russell (TruTV's *Tacoma FD*, MTV's *Teen Wolf*); and the Mexican-American Valls, who hails from Laredo, Texas (Showtime's *Latin Divas of Comedy*).

When these three sassy BFFs get together, they down plenty of tequila and dish about everything from moms to cucarachas (cockroaches) to Farrah Fawcett, and share their funny and intimate stories of childhood Christmas "dramas" that make them uniquely American, undoubtedly Latina and, most of all, friends.

"These stories touch each and every audience member on so many levels no matter their background" Rivas said. "They are also a window into some of the beautiful traditions we have within the Latinx community."

According to Yanez, "The 'special' in the title is an homage to all the TV shows we watched growing up — all those 'Christmas Specials' that we so closely identified with during the holidays, but that had absolutely no Latinos in them (or maybe just Jose Feliciano)."

Diana Yanez is a first generation Cuban-American. Her legendary videos have reached viral proportions (over 15 million views on YouTube) with hits like *Spanish For Your Nanny*, *Let me Borrow That Top*, and *My Puss* (co-written and performed with Margaret Cho). A national TV commercial diva (State Farm, Verizon, Home Depot, etc.), she's always cast as the friendly Latina mom or stern nurse (same thing basically). *Viva La Evolución*, Diana's one-woman show about growing up Cuban American in Miami, won the New York Fringe Festival's "Overall Excellence Award." She traveled the country with Cyndi Lauper's True Colors Tour, and also toured with Margaret Cho performing original comedic songs, sketches and comedy. Television credits include, among others, *Criminal Minds*, *Boston Legal*, *Crossing Jordan* and *Without A Trace*. *The Pip & Pen Show*, her web series with co-star/writer/creator Marjorie Duffield, is available on YouTube. A passionate story teller and performer, *Latina Christmas Special* was created with the intention of shedding light on the universal truths of holidays past, childhood and family, regardless of one's heritage.

MORE-MORE-MORE

Maria Russell is a series regular on TruTV's *Tacoma FD* as the feisty Lt. Salazar; she is currently filming season 2 with legendary cult comedy troupe Broken Lizard. You can also catch Maria this fall on CBS' *Why Women Kill* as Sandy, the wealthy, boozy, fresh-out-of rehab diva. You may also remember some of her other memorable characters on hit shows like *Teen Wolf*, *Southland*, *Criminal Minds*, *Major Crimes*, *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, *CSI*, *The Bold and the Beautiful* and the box office horror hit *Lights Out*. Whether its comedy or drama, you always know Maria Russell is in the house...she's very loud. This self-proclaimed "Mexiuanian" (Mexican and Lithuanian) is a proud, native California girl. She has danced her entire life and has a background in classical ballet, jazz, hip hop and salsa.

Sandra Valls is best known for her hilarious performances on two Showtime hit comedy specials: *The Latin Divas of Comedy* and *Pride: The Gay and Lesbian Comedy Slam*. Her unique mix of physical comedy and brilliant storytelling make it easy to see why the Los Angeles Times calls Sandra "talented and hilarious," and she was also included on Curve Magazine's 2017 Power List as "One of the Most Influential Queer Women in the Country" and "One of the Top 10 Funniest Lesbian Comics". Latina Magazine voted Sandra "One of the Top 33 Bad Ass Comics with Latin Roots" and "Top 10 Latin Comics to Solve SNL's Diversity Issue." Her other television credits include, but are not limited, to *Outlaugh Festival*, *One Night Stand Up* (LOGO), *Comic's Unleashed with Byron Allen* (ABC), *Habla!* (HBO), *Que Locos* (Galavision), *Funny is Funny*, *Latino 101* (Sitv), *BET's Comic View* (BET) and *NickMom Night Out* (Nickelodeon).

Geoffrey Rivas graduated from UCLA with a Master of Fine Arts degree with a concentration on acting. He has received numerous nominations for his stage work and is a founding member of the Latino Theater Company, which, under the artistic direction of Jose Luis Valenzuela, has been producing award-winning Latino theater nationally for 30 years. Film credits include *Under the Tuscan Sun*, *Dragonfly*, *Luminarias*, *La Bamba*, *Born In East L.A.*, *Pow Wow Highway*, *Bound By Honor*, *Above Suspicion* and *Foto Novelas* for PBS, for which he won an ALMA award in 1998. A highlight of Geoff's prolific career on television was nine years as Detective Vega on the original CBS series, *CSI*. His directorial debut, Jozanne Marie's solo show, *Beautiful* — for which Jozanne won a NAACP award for best actress — drew much praise from reviewers. *Latina Christmas Special* was further developed under his direction and is widely considered to be the longest running and most successful show ever presented by the Latino Theater Company.

There will be one public preview of *Latina Christmas Special* on Friday, Dec. 13 at 9 p.m., with **press previews** set for **Saturday, Dec. 14 at 8:30 p.m.**; **Monday, Dec. 16 at 7 p.m.** and **Tuesday, Dec. 17 at 7 p.m.** The **opening** performance will be on **Wednesday, Dec. 18 at 9 p.m.** Performances continue **through Dec. 31**; the performance schedule varies: please check website for dates and start times: Tickets are **\$49** (regular seating) and **\$59** (premium seating) except performances on Dec. 24 and Dec. 31, for which tickets are **\$65** and include appetizers and a glass of champagne.

The **SoHo Playhouse** is located at **15 Vandam St., New York, NY 10013**. For more information and to purchase tickets, call **212 691-1555** (Tues-Sun, 4 p.m.-10 p.m.) or go to www.LatinaChristmasSpecial.com.

Latina Christmas Special contains adult situations and drinking; recommended for ages 13 and up, parental guidance suggested.

Details for Calendar Listings 'Latina Christmas Special'

WHAT:

New York City premiere of *Latina Christmas Special* — An American comedy of Latina proportions! Bursting with laughs, more laughs, music and *escándalo* (scandal), *Latina Christmas Special* makes its NYC debut at the SoHo Playhouse. You thought your holidays with the family were dramatic? Try these three hilarious, touching and surprisingly personal Christmas stories of holidays past told by three acclaimed Latina comedians. **"CRITIC'S CHOICE...** hilarious and heart-wrenching... [a] very special 'Special'" — *Los Angeles Times*

WHO:

- Created by **Diana Yanez**
- Written and performed by **Maria Russell, Sandra Valls** and **Diana Yanez**
- Directed by **Geoffrey Rivas**
- Produced by **Diana Yanez** (AtomicTuna Productions) and **Matthew Quinn** (Combined Artform) with **Darren Lee Cole** (SoHo Playhouse), **Michael Blaha** and **Geoffrey Rivas**

WHEN:

Performances: Dec. 13 – Dec. 31

- **Friday, Dec. 13** at **9 p.m.** (Preview)
- **Saturday, Dec. 14** at **8:30 p.m.** (Press Preview)
- **Monday, Dec. 16** at **7 p.m.** (Press Preview)
- **Tuesday, Dec. 17** at **7 p.m.** (Press Preview)
- **Wednesday, Dec. 18** at **9 p.m.** (Opening Night)
- **Friday, Dec. 20** at **7 p.m.**
- **Saturday, Dec. 21** at **5 p.m.** and **11 p.m.**
- **Sunday, Dec. 22** at **3 p.m.** and **9 p.m.**
- **Monday, Dec. 23** at **5 p.m.** and **9 p.m.**
- **Tuesday, Dec. 24** at **1 p.m.** and **5 p.m.***
- **Thursday, Dec. 26** at **9 p.m.**
- **Friday, Dec. 27** at **7 p.m.**
- **Saturday, Dec. 28** at **3 p.m.** and **9 p.m.**
- **Sunday, Dec. 29** at **5 p.m.**
- **Monday, Dec. 30** at **7 p.m.**
- **Tuesday, Dec. 31** at **5 p.m.***

(*5 p.m. performances on Dec. 24 and Dec. 31 include appetizers and a glass of champagne)

WHERE:

SoHo Playhouse
15 Vandam St.
New York, NY 10013

HOW:

Call **212 691-1555** (Tues-Sun, 4 p.m.-10 p.m.) or go to www.LatinaChristmasSpecial.com

TICKET PRICES:

\$49-\$65

OTHER:

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