

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IMAGINATION STAGE AND HISPANIC HERITAGE FOUNDATION PRESENT *ÓYEME, THE BEAUTIFUL*, A PLAY ABOUT THE PLIGHT OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS, REFUGEES, AND IMMIGRANTS, ON CAPITOL HILL AND AT CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY ON MAY 15

BETHESDA, MD (May 14, 2018) Imagination Stage, Hispanic Heritage Foundation (HHF) and The Catholic University of America's School of Theology and Religious Studies are hosting two special performances of *Óyeme, the Beautiful* – a powerful and timely play about the spiritual, emotional, and physical journey of unaccompanied minors, refugees, and other immigrants – on May 15th on Capitol Hill and at Catholic University. The performances will be followed by a panel discussion of experts and activists on the issue. The performances are free and open to the media (RSVP to Jessica Pettit at jpettit@imaginationstage.org).

“It is critical we bring the play *Óyeme, the Beautiful* to advocates, policy makers, and the general public to mobilize the audience to continue or start their activism on behalf of the most vulnerable and forgotten in our community,” said **Antonio Tijerino, President and CEO of the Hispanic Heritage Foundation, and Board Member of Imagination Stage**. “Thank you to Catholic University and my Senator Chris Van Hollen for hosting *Óyeme*. I’m also very proud of Imagination Stage who once again are demonstrating they truly care about building EVERY child’s development, confidence, and purpose through the arts. We are living at a time when these children and their parents are being villainized for doing exactly what we would do as parents. It is critical we bring their stories to life to build understanding, empathy and hope.”

***Óyeme* on Capitol Hill**

May 15, 9 – 10:30 a.m.

U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, Room 201 - First St NE, Washington, DC

Honorary Co-Host: U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen of Maryland

- *Featuring excerpts from the full production of *Óyeme, the Beautiful*, a briefing from Senator Van Hollen’s Office, and a panel of leaders and experts on immigration plus a continental breakfast*
- *Panelists include: Adriana Beltran, Director for Citizen Security, Washington Office on Latin America; Virdina Gibbs, Legislative Counsel, U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen; Jennifer Podkul, Director of Policy, Kids in Need of Defense; and moderated by Antonio Tijerino, HHF.*

***Óyeme* at The Catholic University of America, School of Theology and Religious Studies**

May 15, 6-8 p.m.

Edward J. Pryzbyla Center, Great Room B & C, The Catholic University of America, **Washington DC**

- *Featuring full production of *Óyeme, the Beautiful* with a panel discussion to follow. Reception will precede the performance*
- *Panelists include: Luis Cardona, Administrator for HHS Positive Youth Development, Health and Human Services; Miriam Gonzales, Playwright; Abel Nunez, Executive Director, Caracen DC;*

Roxana Paalvast, School of Theology and Religious Studies, Catholic University of America; and moderated by Antonio Tijerino, HHF

Written by playwright Miriam Gonzales and directed by Elena Velasco, *Óyeme, the Beautiful* is performed by professional actors and inspired by the stories of students who Imagination Stage worked with beginning in the Fall 2014. For more than a year, a cohort of student refugees fleeing violence from Central America living in the Greater Washington, DC area were convened by Imagination Stage to share their stories to facilitate emotional recovery and aid in the assimilation process. Developmentally-appropriate theatre exercises and dramatic process provides the young people a way to express their emotions, build relationships with fellow group members, share their journeys, and realize they are not alone. For the past two years, the play has been touring to 15 sites (impacting 2,250 additional youth and teachers) in the Greater DC Area. Please visit <http://imaginationstage.org/in-your-community/oyeme/> for more information on Imagination Stage and *Óyeme*.

¡Óyeme! is a collaborative project including Imagination Stage, The Hispanic Heritage Foundation (www.HispanicHeritage.org), Montgomery County Department of Recreation, Council member Nancy Navarro, and the Department of Health and Human Service's Street Outreach Network (SON).

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Laura and Valentina are teenagers just trying to make it through another day in middle school. But, unlike many of their peers, they are refugees from Central America who have fled brutal violence in their home countries to find shelter and pursue their dreams in the United States. Step inside their shoes, hear their stories, see their struggle, and feel their strength as we move through their day. Óyeme, the Beautiful brings to light the undaunted courage and beautiful spirit that fuels these young people, and teaches us the power of friendship, family, and hope.

ABOUT IMAGINATION STAGE

Founded in 1979, Imagination Stage is a 501(c)(3) organization with a mission to inspire creativity through theatre and arts education programs that nurture, challenge, and empower young people of all abilities. It offers year-round professional theatre for young audiences and classes in creative drama/acting, musical theatre, dance, and filmmaking for ages 1-18. Visit www.imaginationstage.org.

ABOUT HHF

The Hispanic Heritage Foundation focuses on education, workforce, service and culture. HHF is headquartered in Washington, DC, and Los Angeles with satellite workspaces in New York, Silicon Valley, San Antonio, and Miami (Visit www.HispanicHeritage.org). Follow HHF on Facebook and Twitter.

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