

April 12, 2021

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Press contact for the NNR: Keith Sherman & Associates: (212) 764-7900, [keith@ksa-pr.com](mailto:keith@ksa-pr.com)**NEW NORMAL REP PRESENTS A WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY PULITZER PRIZE-WINNER NILO CRUZ  
FEATURING EMMY AWARD WINNER JIMMY SMITS AND TONY NOMINEE DAPHNE RUBIN-VEGA****TICKETS ON SALE NOW – STREAMING AT NEWNORMALREP.ORG BEGINS APRIL 21**

ADVANCE STREAMING FOR REVIEW: A review link, for press only, will be available to journalist by April 15.

EMBARGO: All reviews should be held until streaming launches on April 21.

ACCESS PROMOTIONALPHOTOS & VIDEO: [NewNormalRep.org/press](https://NewNormalRep.org/press)TO ARRANGE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPATING ARTISTS contact Keith Sherman & Associates, [keith@ksa-pr.com](mailto:keith@ksa-pr.com) [NewNormalRep.org](https://NewNormalRep.org)

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**NNR - New Normal Rep** (Jack Canfora, Artistic Director; Sally Kilingenstein-Martell, Executive Producer), a new streaming theater company dedicated to producing reflective and inclusive plays, continues with its inaugural season presenting ***Two Sisters and a Piano***, written and directed by Pulitzer Prize-winning and Tony-nominated playwright **Nilo Cruz** (*Anna in the Tropics*). Streaming on demand April 21 – May 23 at [NewNormalRep.org](https://NewNormalRep.org), tickets for ***Two Sisters and a Piano*** are \$25, \$10 for students and theater professionals, and can be purchased at [NewNormalRep.org](https://NewNormalRep.org)

In addition to previously announced Emmy Award and Golden Globe Award-winner **Jimmy Smits** (*Anna in the Tropics*, “The West Wing,” “LA Law”), ***Two Sisters and a Piano*** will feature **Florencia Lozano** (*Rinse, Repeat* at Signature), **Gary Perez** (*The Motherf\*\*ker with the Hat* at Steppenwolf), and Tony Award nominee **Daphne Rubin-Vega** (*Rent*, *Anna in the Tropics*).

Set in 1991, during the Pan American Games in Havana and while the Russians are pulling out of Cuba, this play portrays two sisters, Maria Celia, a novelist, and Sofia, a pianist, serving time under house arrest. Passion infiltrates politics when a lieutenant assigned to their case becomes

infatuated with Maria Celia, whose literature he has been reading. ***Two Sisters and a Piano*** premiered in 1999.

The NNR production of ***Two Sisters and a Piano*** marks a theatrical reunion for Nilo Cruz, Jimmy Smits and Daphne Rubin-Vega. Smits first collaborated with Cruz when he starred in the playwright's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Anna in The Tropics* on Broadway in 2004. Rubin-Vega's Tony-nominated turn in that same production followed her performance as Sofia in the 1999 off-Broadway premiere of Cruz' ***Two Sisters and a Piano*** at The Public. Rubin-Vega reprises the role in this NNR production.

***Two Sisters and a Piano*** had its world premiere in 1999 at the McCarter Theatre.

"While the play is 20 years old it reflects several themes of our lives today: the pandemic lockdown, the #MeToo movement and the corruption of power," says Nilo Cruz. "I think about how the two sisters in the play escape their captivity through their imaginations, through art, and how similar all of our lives have been this past year."

[NNR, New Normal Rep](#) exists not in spite of the pandemic, but because of it. Dedicated to presenting new and lesser known plays, via the internet, [NNR](#) will present works with divergent perspectives that explore the historical, cultural, and psychological forces that have helped to shape our 21st Century lives. [NNR](#) commits to anti-racism training as well as partnership with BIPOC organizations to ensure that diversity is present in the curation of our seasons and the assembling of our companies. Above all, [NNR](#) is dedicated to producing deeply entertaining, engaging and illuminating work.

Following ***Two Sisters and a Piano***, [NNR](#) will present works by playwrights **Julia Blauvelt** (*Airline Disaster, Youthful Journeys of the World*) and Obie winner and Pulitzer nominee **Nikkole Salter** (*In the Continuum, Carnival*). More details to come.

All productions will be streamed on demand at [NewNormalRep.org](http://NewNormalRep.org).

"New Normal Rep began with casual conversations at the beginning of the pandemic and expanded into something substantive," says Jack Canfora, Artistic Director. "NNR is a theatre company for our world today. We strive to illuminate and warm, to offer eclectic stories from diverse voices that will intrigue and unite us, and so much more."

"As theater people, we always knew that our craft had value," says Jill Eikenberry, founding artist, NNR. "But since the plague has descended on us and the possibility of theater has been taken away, we have come to understand more deeply our need to tell stories and the audiences need to hear them."

"Online theater is a new medium with unique challenges, but we also believe it presents unique opportunities," says Sally Kilingenstein-Martell, Executive Producer, NNR. "For too many years, high quality theater has felt out of reach financially and culturally to too many people. New Normal Rep can, in a small way, aim to help in bridging this disconnect by providing affordable, diverse, high quality theater to a literally limitless audience."

The New Normal Rep Board of Directors includes: Jeffrey Bean, Jack Canfora, Jill Eikenberry, Melanye Duschene Finister, Eleanor Handley, Melissa Joyner, Sally Klingenstein-Martell, Maria Gabriella Landers, John Schaeffler, Carol Todd and Carl Vorwerk.

Tickets for upcoming NNR productions are \$25, \$10 for students and theater professionals, and can now be purchased at [www.NewNormalRep.org](http://www.NewNormalRep.org). A three-play season subscription is available for \$75, and includes free access to special programming including live play-readings, special Q&A discussions and virtual happy hours.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



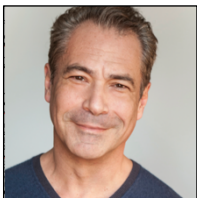
**NILO CRUZ** (*Playwright / Director*). This Cuban-American playwright gained national prominence in 2003 when he won the Pulitzer Prize for drama for his play *Anna in the Tropics*, for which he also received a Tony Award nomination. The immigrant experience is a common theme in many of Cruz's plays and he has become known for his ability to successfully weave strains of magical realism and other literary traditions into his works. In addition to the Pulitzer, he has received numerous awards, including those from the Kennedy Center Fund, American Theatre Critics and the Humana Festival for New American Plays; as well as grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Rockefeller Foundation, among others. His plays include *Dancing on Her Knees*; *A Park in Our House*; *Two Sisters and a Piano*; *A Bicycle Country*; *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*; *Lorca in a Green Dress*; *Beauty of the Father*; *Hurricane*; and *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, as well as translations of Doña Rosita the Spinster; The House of Bernarda Alba; Life Is a Dream; and ¡Ay, Carmela! His work has been seen at numerous theaters around the country including, among others, South Coast Rep, the Mark Taper Forum, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Washington D.C.'s Studio Theatre and New York's Public Theater; and around the world in Canada, England, France, Australia, Germany, Belarus, Costa Rica, Colombia, Japan and Spain. As a lyricist, he is a frequent collaborator with composer Gabriela Lena Frank. He has written the libretti for *The Conquest Requiem* and *The Santos Oratorio* for Ms. Frank, and the text of orchestral songs, *La Centinela y la paloma*. Cruz also adapted Ann Patchett's 2001 novel *Bel Canto* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago, with Peruvian composer Jimmy López and recently premiered the oratorio *Dreamers* by López at Cal Performance in Berkeley, California. Cruz, who received an M.F.A. from Brown University and an honorary doctorate degree from Whittier College, has twice previously served as a playwright-in-residence: In 2000, for the McCarter Theatre, in Princeton, N.J., and in 2001 for the New Theatre in Coral Gables, Florida, which commissioned *Anna in the Tropics*. Cruz has also taught drama at Yale, Brown and the University of Iowa. During the 2019/20 academic year, he was the Hearst Theater Lab Initiative Distinguished Visiting Playwright-in-Residence at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television. He is a member of the New Dramatists.

*A Park in Our House*; *Two Sisters and a Piano*; *A Bicycle Country*; *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*; *Lorca in a Green Dress*; *Beauty of the Father*; *Hurricane*; and *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, as well as translations of Doña Rosita the Spinster; The House of Bernarda Alba; Life Is a Dream; and ¡Ay, Carmela! His work has been seen at numerous theaters around the country including, among others, South Coast Rep, the Mark Taper Forum, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Washington D.C.'s Studio Theatre and New York's Public Theater; and around the world in Canada, England, France, Australia, Germany, Belarus, Costa Rica, Colombia, Japan and Spain. As a lyricist, he is a frequent collaborator with composer Gabriela Lena Frank. He has written the libretti for *The Conquest Requiem* and *The Santos Oratorio* for Ms. Frank, and the text of orchestral songs, *La Centinela y la paloma*. Cruz also adapted Ann Patchett's 2001 novel *Bel Canto* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago, with Peruvian composer Jimmy López and recently premiered the oratorio *Dreamers* by López at Cal Performance in Berkeley, California. Cruz, who received an M.F.A. from Brown University and an honorary doctorate degree from Whittier College, has twice previously served as a playwright-in-residence: In 2000, for the McCarter Theatre, in Princeton, N.J., and in 2001 for the New Theatre in Coral Gables, Florida, which commissioned *Anna in the Tropics*. Cruz has also taught drama at Yale, Brown and the University of Iowa. During the 2019/20 academic year, he was the Hearst Theater Lab Initiative Distinguished Visiting Playwright-in-Residence at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television. He is a member of the New Dramatists.



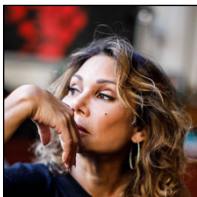
**FLORENCIA LOZANO** (*Maria Celia*) is an actor, writer and performance artist. Theatre includes: *Rinse, Repeat* (SIGNATURE), *Devil of Choice* (LABYrinth), *And She Would Stand Like This* (Movement Theatre Co.), *Winners* (EST), *Red Dog Howls* (NYTW), *Lady Macduff* (Shakespeare in the Park), *Placebo* (Playwrights' Horizons), *Privilege* (Second Stage), *Last Easter* (MCC), *Where's My Money?* (MTC/LAB), *Dirty Story* (LAB). TV includes: "The Baker and the Beauty," "Gossip Girl," "Blue Bloods," "Ugly Betty," "Law and Order: SVU & CI," "The Mysteries of Laura," "Madame Secretary," "Kevin Can Wait," "The Blacklist" and "Enemy Within." She played Claudia Messina in Netflix's *Narcos* and "Tea Delgado" on ABC's "One Life to Live." Films include: *Life*

*After You* (which she also co-wrote and produced), *Amy Makes Three*, *Faraway Eyes*, *The Ministers*, *Perfect Stranger*, and *Veronika Decides To Die*. Florencia is a member of EST and of the LABYrinth Theater Company where she is LAB's literary manager. Her play: *underneathmybed* was produced at the Rattlestick Playwrights' Theatre and won HOLA's (Hispanic Organization of Latino Actors) Best New Play Award in 2010. Her play *Busted* was produced by Rising Phoenix at CINO nights and her new play *Papilucho* is currently in development. Florencia got her MFA at NYU's Graduate Acting Program and her BA at Brown University where she studied Comparative Literature. She can currently be heard in the radio play of *Romeo Y Julieta* at The Public, directed by Saheem Ali, where she plays Capulet, Julieta's (Lupita Nyong'o)'s mother and father.



**GARY PEREZ** (*Victor Manuel*) is an Award-nominated film, TV, and stage actor and a founder of the Latino Actor's Base, now known as The LABYrinth Theatre Company in NYC. Gary's screen work includes recurring roles on hit shows - "13 Reasons Why" (Netflix), "The Blacklist" (NBC), "The Last Ship" (TNT), "Homeland" (Showtime) as well as "The Sopranos," "Oz" (HBO), and many more. Gary most recently has guested on "911 Lonestar," "Prodigal Son" (FOX), "Tommy" (CBS), "Little America" (Apple TV), and can be seen with John Leguizamo in the very important - Ava DuVernay-helmed Netflix miniseries - "When They See Us." On stage, Gary has worked with Pulitzer Prize-winning writers including Nilo Cruz, John Patrick Shanley, Lynn Nottage, and

Stephen Adly Guirgis. He has collaborated with multiple award-winning directors, including Anna D. Shapiro, Tony Taccone, Brian Kulick, and Jo Bonney, at national theaters, including Steppenwolf, Yale Rep, 2nd Stage, The McCarter, La Jolla Playhouse, Berkeley Rep, and the Public Theater. His portrayal of Cousin Julio in Stephen Guirgis' *The Motherf\*\*ker with the Hat* directed by Anna D. Shapiro at Steppenwolf garnered him a JEFF Award nomination and the honor to perform alongside Jimmy Smits and long-time friend John Ortiz (a co-founder of Latino Actors Base).



**DAPHNE RUBIN-VEGA** (*Sofia*) can next be seen playing 'Daniela' in the upcoming Warner Bros feature *In The Heights* directed by Jon Chu. During the early months of the pandemic, she shot the Netflix series "Social Distance" produced by Jenji Kohan and Tara Hermann, and *Same Storm*, the newest Peter Hedges film. Additional TV credits include "Katy Keene" (CW) and "Tales Of The City" (Netflix). A staple of the New York theatre community, Daphne earned a Tony nomination for her portrayal of 'Mimi' in the original cast of *Rent* and another for *Anna In The Tropics*. She recently starred in the musical *Miss You Like Hell* at The Public Theatre and in the one-woman show *Espanada Loca*, which was written for her. She helped adapt the play into the scripted

podcast *The Horror of Dolores Roach*, which is currently in pre-production for Amazon TV. Additional theater credits include Broadway revivals of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Les Mis*; *Two Sisters And A Piano* and *F\*cking A* at The Public; *Romeo & Juliet* at Classic Stage; and *Jack Goes Boating* opposite Philip Seymour Hoffman.





**JIMMY SMITS** (*Lieutenant Portuondo*) is a graduate of Brooklyn College's Center for the Performing Arts, CUNY and holds an MFA from Cornell University's Theatre Arts Program. Smits began his acting career in the New York theater and returns often. In December, 2012, he appeared in Stephen Adly Guirgis's hit play *Motherf\*\*ker With The Hat* at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Company. He performed on Broadway in the critically acclaimed hit *God of Carnage* (2009). Prior to that he starred in Nilo Cruz's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Anna in the Tropics* which began at the McCarter Theatre and went on to Broadway. Other credits include the New York Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park presentations of *Much Ado About Nothing* (2004) and *Twelfth Night* (2002); *Hamlet* (Joe Papp, Director) and *The Ballad of Soapy Smith* (Public Theater Downtown); *Ariano* (George C. Wolfe, Director), *Buck, Little Victories* (The American Place/Playwrights Horizon); Regional: *The Guys* (Berkeley Repertory); *Death and the Maiden* (Mark Taper Forum); *Othello* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival); *Native Speech* (Center Stage), *Loose Ends*, *Gemini* (Hangar Theatre, Ithaca, NY); Smits will next be seen in the feature film version of *In The Heights*, directed by Jon Chu. Smits most recently starred in the NBC series "Bluff City Law." Previous projects include "How to Get Away With Murder," "Brooklyn Nine-Nine," "24: Legacy," "The Get Down" and "Sons of Anarchy," "Dexter," for which he received his 12th Emmy nomination, PBS' "Latin Music USA," "CANE," "The West Wing," "NYPD Blue" (Golden Globe Award), and "L.A. Law" (Emmy Award). His film credits include *Who We Are Now*, *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, *Mother and Child*, *Backyard*, *The Jane Austen Book Club*, *Star Wars: Episodes II & III*, *My Family/Mi Familia* (IFP Spirit Award nomination), *Old Gringo*, *Price of Glory*, *Switch*, *Running Scared*, and *The Believers*.



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