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Arizona Theatre Company Announces Evelina Fernández as Recipient of the 2026 Annual National Latine Playwrights Award

Arizona-raised playwright honored for new play *Blow Away the Clouds*, to receive reading as part of the National Latine Playwrights Award Festival in September

PHOENIX, Ariz. (August 11, 2026) - Arizona Theatre Company (ATC) has named acclaimed playwright, screenwriter and actor Evelina Fernández as the recipient of the 2026 National Latine Playwrights Award for her new play with songs and music, *Blow Away the Clouds*. The award recognizes outstanding new plays by Latine playwrights and reflects ATC's more than 30-year commitment to developing new work by and elevating Latine voices.

As part of the 2026 National Latine Playwrights Award Festival on Thursday, Sept. 17, at Tempe Center for the Arts, *Blow Away the Clouds* will receive a public staged reading directed by award-winning director José Luis Valenzuela, Artistic Director of the Latino Theater Company in Los Angeles.

Set in an Arizona mining town during the Great Depression, *Blow Away the Clouds* follows four women navigating the thin line between survival, celebration and sin. Bound by secrets, forbidden desires and the danger of working in an unregulated mine, they rely on one another to rise together and celebrate life. Featuring live music and heartfelt songs, the play is a moving exploration of female solidarity, faith and hope.

"There couldn't be a more fitting recipient this year," said Matt August, Kasser Family Artistic Director of Arizona Theatre Company. "An Arizona-raised playwright telling an Arizona story through one of the country's premier awards for new Latine work perfectly reflects our mission as Arizona's Official State Theatre. We believe developing new plays isn't just about creating the next great work—it's about ensuring the stories that define our communities are heard, celebrated and shared."

"From the first reading, *Blow Away the Clouds* stood out for its extraordinary heart, humor, and humanity," said Elaine Romero, director of the National Latine Playwrights Award and Festival. "It's no wonder Evelina Fernández is a national treasure. She has crafted a deeply moving Arizona story, weaving music and storytelling together in a way that feels both intimate and unforgettable. It's exactly the kind of work this award was created to celebrate."

The National Latine Playwrights Award Festival will celebrate Fernández with a public reading of *Blow Away the Clouds*, performed by a cast of Arizona artists accompanied by a live musician. Guests are also invited to a pre-show reception featuring food, music and community celebration, followed by an awards presentation honoring Fernández and a conversation with August, Fernández, Valenzuela and Romero about the play's development and the importance of championing new Latine voices.

The festival begins at 5 p.m., with the staged reading beginning at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 17, at the Tempe Center for the Arts. Admission is free; advance registration is required at **atc.org/NLPA**.

Raised in Arizona with deep ties to the Phoenix community, Fernández has built a powerful body of work that explores the Mexican diaspora with depth, humor, history and heart. An award-winning playwright, screenwriter and actor, she is known for creating stories that move across generations, borders and memory. She is the recipient of multiple Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Awards for Outstanding Writing, including honors for *A Mexican Trilogy* and *The Mother of Henry*. Her work has been produced by leading theatres across the country, and she recently developed *Blow Away the Clouds* at South Coast Repertory. Her adaptation, *Antigone: In the Language of Kings*, will premiere at LA's Getty Villa outdoor amphitheater in September 2026.

Valenzuela, who directs this year's winning play, is Artistic Director of the Latino Theater Company and The Los Angeles Theatre Center, Distinguished Professor Emeritus at UCLA's School of Theater, Film & Television, and founder of the National Latinx Theater Initiative. A visionary director and advocate for Chicanx and Latinx theatre for more than three decades, he has led critically acclaimed productions across the United States and internationally while helping shape generations of artists and new work. He received the 2024 Gordon Davidson Award from the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation and the 2025 Stage Raw Lifetime Achievement Award, and served on the 2025 Pulitzer Prize jury for Drama.

Established in 1995, the National Latine Playwrights Award is among the nation's longest-running awards dedicated to developing and celebrating new works by Latine playwrights. The award has recognized many of the country's most influential Latine playwrights while advancing stories that reflect the richness and diversity of the Latine experience.

About Arizona Theatre Company

Arizona Theatre Company (ATC) is Arizona's Official State Theatre and the state's only League of Resident Theatres (LORT) member. Founded in 1966, ATC creates compelling live theatre that sparks curiosity, empathy, and meaningful connection through stories that reflect the world around us. Led by Kasser Family Artistic Director Matt August and Executive Director Ana Rose O'Halloran, ATC serves audiences statewide through annual seasons in Tucson and the greater Phoenix area, bringing together world-class artists and Arizona's vibrant creative community to produce exceptional theatre. Now entering its 59th season, ATC continues its legacy of inspiring audiences while enriching the cultural life of Arizona. Learn more at **atc.org**.