

GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

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CAST ANNOUNCED FOR “KING LIZ” WEST COAST PREMIERE AT GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

WRITTEN BY FERNANDA COPPEL AND DIRECTED BY JESCA PRUDENCIO

FEATURING RAY ABRUZZO, OSCAR BEST, NANCY LINARI, EVAN MORRIS REISER,
MICHELLE ORTIZ AND SABRINA SLOAN

PREVIEWS BEGIN JULY 12 - OPENING NIGHT IS JULY 21

LOS ANGELES (June 14, 2022) – Geffen Playhouse today announced the full cast for the West Coast premiere of its production of *King Liz*, written by **Fernanda Coppel** (*Chimichangas and Zoloft*, *AYA or Dear Lover*) and directed by **Jesca Prudencio** (*Interstate*, *The Great Leap*).

The cast includes **Ray Abruzzo** (*The Sopranos*, *Italian American Reconciliation*) as Mr. Candy; **Oscar Best** (*Blood Knot*, *Arthur the King*) as Coach Jones; **Nancy Linari** (*Marvel's Spiderman*, *Gilmore Girls*) as Barbara Flowers; **Evan Morris Reiser** (*Othello*, *Sweetie*) as Freddie Luna; **Michelle Ortiz** (Hulu's *This Fool* and *MADtv*) as Gabby Fuentes; and **Sabrina Sloan** (*Hamilton*, *Hairspray*) as Liz Rico.

Previews for *King Liz* begin Tuesday, July 12 in the Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater at Geffen Playhouse. Opening night is Thursday, July 21.

It's good to be king. Liz Rico is a powerful sports agent who represents NBA superstars, having fought her way to the top of a male-dominated profession with her skill for cutthroat negotiations. Given the chance to sign Freddie Luna, a once-in-a-generation high school talent with a troubled past, Liz sees an opportunity to take her career to the next level. But when accusations start swirling around the young phenom, Liz must attempt to rebound Freddie's career or protect her own crown.

KING LIZ

Written by **Fernanda Coppel**

Directed by **Jesca Prudencio**

Previews: Tuesday, July 12 – Wednesday, July 20, 2022

Opening Night: Thursday, July 21, 2022

Closing Night: Sunday, August 14, 2022

CAST

Ray Abruzzo as Mr. Candy
Oscar Best as Coach Jones
Nancy Linari as Barbara Flowers
Evan Morris Reiser as Freddie Luna
Michelle Ortiz as Gabby Fuentes
Sabrina Sloan as Liz Rico

PRODUCTION TEAM

Scenic & Video Designer **Justin Humphres**
Costume Designer **Devario D. Simmons**
Lighting Designer **Rebecca Bonebrake**
Sound Designer **Melanie Chen Cole**
Production Stage Manager **Lizzie Thompson**
Casting Director **Phyllis Schuringa, CSA**

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Monday	No performance
Tuesday – Friday	8:00 p.m.
Saturday	3:00 and 8:00 p.m.
Sunday	2:00 and 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION

Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater at Geffen Playhouse
10886 Le Conte Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets currently priced at \$30 - \$129.00. Available by phone at 310.208.2028 or online at www.geffenplayhouse.org. Fees may apply.

This production contains explicit language. Not recommended to those under the age of 14. Children under 6 years of age will not be admitted.

Proof of vaccination and masks are required – additional policy details can be found at <https://www.geffenplayhouse.org/plan/reopening/>.

Rush tickets for each day's performance are made available to the general public two hours before showtime at the box office. \$35.00 General/\$15.00 Student.

COLLEGE AUDIENCES

Through a variety of events and other opportunities, Geffen Playhouse welcomes college students to experience the live storytelling presented on our stages. We are proud of our association with UCLA's School of Theater, Film, and Television, and open our doors to all college students throughout Los Angeles. More information is available at www.geffenplayhouse.org/college.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Fernanda Coppel (Playwright)

Fernanda Coppel is a Mexican/American playwright and screenwriter. Her play *King Liz* received its world premiere at Second Stage Theater in 2015. *King Liz* was published by Samuel French and has recently been optioned by ABC Signature and 42 for television. Fernanda will be penning the pilot. Her professional New York debut, *Chimichangas and Zoloft* premiered at the Atlantic Theater Company in 2012 and is published by Samuel French. Fernanda received the New Play Commission from Williamstown Theatre Festival in 2015 where she wrote her latest play: *AYA or Dear Lover*. She's currently working on a commission for La Jolla Playhouse of a new play entitled: *Friendship Park*. Fernanda's work has won the 2012 HOLA Award for Outstanding Achievement in Playwriting and the 2012 Helen Merrill Award. She's an alum of: The Juilliard School, NYU (M.F.A.), and UC Santa Cruz (B.A.). Fernanda's also written for TV shows such as: Shonda Rhimes-produced *How to Get Away with Murder*, Jason Katims's *Rise*, USA Network's adaptation of *Queen of the South*, among others. In feature film, Fernanda co-wrote *No One Gets Out Alive* which was produced by Netflix and Andy Serkis' UK-based Imaginarium Productions and premiered on Netflix in fall 2021.

Jesca Prudencio (Director)

Jesca Prudencio is a director and choreographer dedicated to developing new theatrical works that humanize issues nationally and internationally. Recent works: *Can We Now?* (La Jolla Playhouse WOW Festival), *Interstate* by Kit Yan and *Melissa Li* (currently at East West Players), *It's a Ship Show* (Virgin Voyages), and the award-winning short film *American Quartet* (Filmelodic, NYC). Other credits include *The Great Leap* by Lauren Yee (Steppenwolf Theatre), *Vietgone* and *Actually* (San Diego Rep), *Calling* (La MaMa E.T.C.), *Man of God* (East West Players), *A&Q* (Pineapple Lab, Philippines), and *FAN* (B-Floor Theatre, Thailand). Jesca is Head of Directing at SDSU's School of Theatre, Television, and Film. She is a recipient of The Drama League Fellowship and the inaugural Julie Taymor World Theater Fellowship. B.F.A. NYU Tisch, M.F.A. UC San Diego. jescaprudencio.com

Ray Abruzzo (Mr. Candy)

Ray Abruzzo starred in *The Mystery of Love & Sex* at Seattle's ACT Theatre, *Dinner with the Boys* at the Acorn Theatre on Theatre Row, *The Guys* at the Malibu Playhouse, and played the title role of *Lombardi* at Florida's Mosaic Theatre. Additional theater credits include *Mauritius* at Pasadena Playhouse, Louis LaRusso II's *Vespers Eve* and *Stooplife*, the world premiere of John Patrick Shanley's *Italian American Reconciliation*, Robert Dubac's one-man show *The Male Intellect: An Oxymoron* in Chicago and Boston, and 10 years with L.A.'s Playwrights' Kitchen Ensemble as a director/actor. Television guest star: *NYPD Blue*, various *Law & Orders*, *NCIS*, *House*, *Criminal Minds*, *Ray Donovan*, and dozens more. He was a series regular or recurring on *L.A. Law*, *Dynasty*, *Night Court*, *Doogie Howser M.D.*, *The Practice*, *Boston Legal*, *Mad Men*, most notably as Little Carmine on *The Sopranos* and as "trans-amorous" Sal on *Transparent*. Ray was Allison Janney's husband in the film *Bad Education*.

Oscar Best (Coach Jones)

Oscar Best started his stage career as a dancer, dancing with the Dance Theater of Harlem. Coming to L.A., he performed as Captain Richard Davenport in *A Soldier's Play* at Malibu Stage Company, and in *Stick Fly* at PlayMakers Repertory Company. Oscar was awarded Best Lead Actor by the NAACP in his role as Zachariah in *Blood Knot*. He is a lifetime member of the famed Actors Studio. Film: *Arthur the King* with Mark Wahlberg and Nathalie Emmanuel, *When We Kill the Creators* with Shelby Lynne. Oscar would like to thank his mentor Dick Van Dyke who gave him his first acting job, but more importantly his friendship.

Nancy Linari (Barbara Flowers)

Nancy Linari began her career in Chicago performing with the famed improv comedy group The Second City. A few of her notables from TV/Film include: *American Auto*, *This Is Us*, *Gilmore Girls*, *Bosch*, the *L.A.*

Law pilot and the Academy Award–winning *The Social Network*. Selected theatre performances: *Ruthless! The Musical* at the Canon Theatre, *I'm Getting My Act Together and Taking It on the Road* with Gretchen Cryer and Donna McKechnie, *I'm Not Rappaport* with Shelly Berman and Garrett Morris, and *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove* with Jean Smart. Nancy joined the Marvel Universe as the iconic Aunt May in Insomniac's hit *Spider-Man* on PS4, as well as in the animated series *Marvel's Spider-Man*. She is also an award-winning audiobook narrator who once appeared on *The \$25,000 Pyramid*, winning a trip to Hong Kong and a 10-year supply of rice.

Evan Morris Reiser (Freddie Luna)

Evan Morris Reiser was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. He attended 4 years at the prestigious Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Performing Arts. He then went on to study at The Neighborhood Playhouse Conservatory in New York. Evan went on to perform in many theatre projects including roles at Lynn Redgrave Theatre in *Sweetie*, The Metropolitan Opera in *Othello*, and The Soho Playhouse in *Black Magic*. Some of his television roles include *Shades of Blue* and *Deception*. After moving to Los Angeles, he landed the role of Solo in the short film *Peacocking* which premiered at the Mammoth Film Festival. Evan is also musically talented, playing in bands as a singer, guitarist, drummer and has performed solo on many city stages.

Michelle Ortiz (Gabby Fuentes)

Michelle Ortiz is thrilled to be making her Geffen Playhouse debut! You can catch her later this summer as a series regular in the Hulu Original series *This Fool* as Maggie, premiering August 12th. Ortiz was previously a series regular on CW's *MADtv*, and recurred on such shows as *Gentefied* (Netflix), *Tacoma FD* (truTV), *Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn* (Nickelodeon). Other recent guest stars include *I Think You Should Leave* (Netflix), *Mr. Corman* (Apple TV+), *B Positive* and *Mom* (CBS). Upcoming, she will be seen opposite Jaime Camil in the feature *Snag* for Paramount+ and a voice in *Primos*, an animated series for Disney+.

Sabrina Sloan (Liz Rico)

Fresh off a four year run as Angelica Schuyler in *Hamilton*, performing opposite Lin-Manuel Miranda in Puerto Rico, Sabrina is thrilled to be back home and making her Geffen debut with *King Liz*. A native of Southern California, she spent a decade in New York in the original Broadway companies of *Hairspray* and *Catch Me If You Can*, *Motown*, and the first national tour of *In the Heights*—where she also played opposite Lin-Manuel Miranda at the Pantages here in Los Angeles. Regionally, Sabrina has been a part of new works at the Pasadena Playhouse (*Sleepless in Seattle* and *Ray Charles Live!*) and Boston Court (*Gulls*), and has starred in *Rent*, *Children of Eden*, and *Ain't Misbehavin'*. She is a graduate of Northwestern University's prestigious acting program and her TV and film credits include HBO's *Hacks*, *All Rise*, *Ode to Joy*, *Blindspot*, *The Mysteries of Laura*, and *Boston Legal*. Grateful for every opportunity to create and share space in live theater. Thank you to my family always for allowing me to go play.

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ABOUT GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

Geffen Playhouse has been a hub of the Los Angeles theater scene since opening its doors in 1995. Noted for its intimacy and celebrated for its world-renowned mix of classic and contemporary plays,

provocative new works and second productions, the not-for-profit organization continues to present a body of work that has garnered national recognition. Named in honor of entertainment mogul and philanthropist David Geffen, who made the initial donation to the theater, the company was founded by Gilbert Cates and is currently helmed by Executive Director Gil Cates, Jr., Artistic Director Matt Shakman and Board Chair Adi Greenberg. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen welcomes an audience of more than 130,000 each year, and maintains extensive education and community engagement programs, designed to involve underserved young people and the community at large in the arts.

www.geffenplayhouse.org

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