



PUBLICITY  
CTGMedia@CTGLA.org

601 W TEMPLE ST | LOS ANGELES, CA 90012 | [CenterTheatreGroup.org](http://CenterTheatreGroup.org)

Contact: Center Theatre Group and MUSE/IQUE  
Tim Choy, Davidson & Choy Publicity [t.choy@dcpublicity.com](mailto:t.choy@dcpublicity.com) | 323-697-5039  
44 – Pete Sanders [petesandersgroup@gmail.com](mailto:petesandersgroup@gmail.com) | 917-270-2719

**For immediate release**

**Center Theatre Group Announces  
Spring 2025 CTG:FWD Programming**



**Kirk Douglas Theatre  
A New Musical About our 44<sup>th</sup> President, Barack Obama**

**44**

**February 23 to March 23, 2025**

**Tickets On Sale January 27**

**Kirk Douglas Theatre  
Return Engagement Of  
TheaterWorksUSA's *NY Times* Critic's Pick**

***El Otro Oz***

**March 29 to April 13, 2025**

**Mark Taper Forum  
Two New Programs from  
**MUSE/IQUE**  
March 21 to March 23, 2025  
August 8 to August 10, 2025**

**For tickets and information visit [CenterTheatreGroup.org](http://CenterTheatreGroup.org)**

LOS ANGELES, CA (January 23, 2025)—**Spring 2025 CTG:FWD** programming is announced, featuring theatrical and musical programs. Two productions are at the Kirk Douglas Theatre: the first is the new musical comedy **44**, which began with a sold-out engagement at LA's The Bourbon Room, followed by performances in New York City and Philadelphia and then to Chicago at the time of the 2024 Democratic National Convention. It takes a satirical look at the rise and presidency of Barack Obama, as well as the eccentric political characters he met along the way.

**44** will be performed at the Kirk Douglas Theatre from February 23 to March 23 (opening Thursday, February 27). It is written, composed, and directed by **Eli Bauman**, and is produced by **Monica Saunders-Weinberg** (Hana Black Productions), along with Bauman. Tickets on sale to the general public beginning Monday, January 27, 2025 at [centertheatregroup.org](http://centertheatregroup.org).

Obama's election changed history. And as we can clearly see, it also ended racism forever! But **44** is the story of the Obama you won't read about in history books ... because history books are now banned in most states. But also because **44** is the story of Obama as Joe Biden kinda sorta remembers it ... as a Musical!

Bauman said, "As we survived the totally normal and stress-free 2024 election and Inauguration Day, we hope you'll join us for a look back at the 44th Presidency of the United States—when the White House was full of hope, when the President didn't endorse a violent attack on his own Vice President, and the President's largest scandal was wearing a tan suit."

Chris Jones said in the *Chicago Tribune*, "**44** is smart, sophisticated satire, a hilarious spoof R&B musical stocked with top-drawer talent and comedic invention with Broadway-caliber singing and a chic, uber-cool vibe. It tickled me purple all night long ... with vocal tours de force for Joe Biden, Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, Hilary Clinton and a plethora of antagonistic, warbling Republicans from John Boehner to Mitch McConnell to Sarah Palin."

**44** is followed by a return engagement of **TheaterWorksUSA's** *New York Times* Critic's Pick **El Otro Oz** to the Kirk Douglas Theatre from March 29 to April 13. Click your heels together tres veces and take a transformative journey with this salsa, merengue, and Mexican folk-infused musical inspired by *The Wizard of Oz*.

This bilingual musical by Mando Alvarado, Tommy Newman, and Jaime Lozano tells the story of Dora. As her fifteenth birthday approaches, Dora, a contemporary Latiné teenager, struggles with her family's ideas about tradition and dreads her impending quinceañera. But, when Dora gets swept away to a strange new land, she learns how to celebrate her unique rhythm and embrace her cultural identity.

*The New York Times* said that *El Otro Oz* "... isn't your grandparents' *Wizard of Oz*. Or your parents' *Wiz*. Or your older sister's *Wicked*. *El Otro Oz* is a high-spirited mix of all these shows, with more than a dozen songs and several winning performances. No time to click heels in this 65-minute telling: these shoes are made for dancing."

The newly announced CTG:FWD attractions are completed by two new concerts from **MUSE/IQUE** in the Mark Taper Forum from March 21 to 23 and August 8 to 10. MUSE/IQUE is a member-supported, nonprofit performing arts organization making radically engaging live music experiences accessible for all. Built on a tradition of community and collaboration, they create events that feature an eclectic mix of artists and artistic disciplines that take place at a variety of our city's historic locales and cultural institutions.

In March, MUSE/IQUE pays tribute to **Ray Charles** with the story of how his diverse musical genres, influences, and collaborators all culminated in his **landmark recording of “America the Beautiful” in 1972**. In August, MUSE/IQUE explores the bustling music scene where salsa, boogaloo, mambo and more converged in New York in the neighborhood known as “Spanish Harlem” during the postwar World War II era. More details about these performances will be announced next week.

MUSE/IQUE creates immersive musical adventures and illuminates the music that shapes our lives. By reimagining the traditional format of the live classical orchestral experience, **Artistic Director Rachael Worby** seamlessly blends musical performances with researched curation. Their mission is to build empathy and awaken curiosity through live events and strong partnerships with fellow nonprofit organizations in Pasadena and the greater Los Angeles area.

Upcoming Spring 2025 CTG:FWD programming at the Mark Taper Forum is made possible through the generous support of the **S. Mark Taper Foundation**. Additional funding is provided by gifts to the Artistic Director Discretionary Fund. Tickets and information are available at [centertheatregroup.org](http://centertheatregroup.org).

These events are a continuation of an initiative created by Artistic Director **Snehal Desai** beginning in 2023. Desai said, “CTG:FWD continues to expand the variety of programming and experiences we are able to bring to Center Theatre Group audiences. TheaterWorksUSA has brought us musicals based on Dav Pilkey’s enormously popular characters with *Dog Man: The Musical* and *Cat Kid Comic Club: The Musical*. Now, they bring us this critically acclaimed reimagining of *Oz*, with a lasting identification with the heroism and courage among characters that have become among the most enduring of the past hundred years, no matter the version.”

Desai continued, “In an entirely different vein, *44* brings us a hilarious revisiting of the recent past, even as it feels distant now—but more importantly, allows us to support a new musical born right here in Los Angeles. Finally, I could not be more thrilled to continue our partnership MUSE/IQUE, led by the incomparable Rachael Worby, as they kick off their season under the roof of the historic Mark Taper Forum.”

Center Theatre Group will also be rolling out more special events and opportunities under the CTG:FWD banner throughout the coming year.

**44**

**Written and Directed by Eli Bauman**

**Choreography by James Alsop**

**Musical Direction by Anthony "Brew" Brewster**

**Produced by Monica Saunders-Weinberg and Eli Bauman**

**Kirk Douglas Theatre | February 23—March 23, 2025**

The smash-hit musical comedy **44** comes to the Kirk Douglas Theatre from sold-out engagements in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago at the time of the 2024 Democratic National Convention, and LA’s The Bourbon Room, where it originated. *44* is a satirical look at the rise and presidency of Barack Obama, as well as the eccentric political characters he met along the way.

*44* is written, composed, and directed by former Obama campaign organizer **Eli Bauman** (NBC's *Maya & Marty*), and is produced by **Monica Saunders-Weinberg** (Hana Black Productions), along with Bauman.

Andrea Beenham in *Music Connection* said *44* is “brilliant! A perfect combination of political history, Hollywood sparkle, and delicious, spicy comedy in a show for the ages.”

Laura Foti Cohen said in Larchmont Buzz, “It took more than 200 years after Alexander Hamilton’s death for a hit musical to elevate his legacy ... Obama is already the subject of an adoring musical tribute. *44* redefines nostalgia for a particular audience, who wistfully recall that relative blink-of-an-eye-ago age, when Barack and Michelle danced at the White House and healthcare for all was a common goal. It’s not like we’re talking ancient times, but this rousing, clever, musical sure makes it feel like a contemporary Camelot. Oh yes, there is a point of view, as well as a trucker’s vocabulary.”

*44* quickly proved to be a must-see show, drawing in audiences that included Stevie Wonder, Martin Short, Congressman (now Senator) Adam Schiff, Martin Lawrence, Cheyenne Jackson, Wanda Sykes, Charlemagne Tha God, Tobey Maguire, Bill Burr, and the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

Following its LA run, *44* took home seven 2023 BroadwayWorld L.A. Awards, including Best Musical, Best Direction of a Musical (Eli Bauman), Best Musical Direction (Anthony Brewster), and Best Choreography (James Alsop).

**Eli Bauman** (Writer, Composer, Director, Producer) was born and raised in Los Angeles to his mother Mary, a therapist for special needs children, and father, Jon, also known as “Bowzer” from the retro 50's nostalgia TV show/most random band to play Woodstock, “Sha Na Na.” After enduring this not remotely strange childhood, Bauman graduated from Columbia University with a degree in English and Creative Writing. Upon graduation, Eli toured the country with his father, singing in casinos ranging from the 10,000 seat Mohegan Sun Aren” to the utterly depressing Boomtown Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi. After moving back to LA in 2007 to pursue a career in Hollywood, Eli gave up the glamorous world of television production for the even more glamorous world of political campaigning, moving to Las Vegas' largest and hottest county to organize for radical fringe candidate, Barack Obama, whom we've never heard from since.

After the campaign, Bauman coordinated Veterans Affairs for Obama's 2009 Inaugural Committee and interned for ABC's Special Investigative Unit, where he was shoved by disgraced bamboozler, Bernie Madoff. Later, Bauman transitioned back to scripted television, writing episodes of FX's *Lights Out* and NBC's *Prime Suspect*, before moving onto variety television, including the Emmy nominated *ACLU: Stand For Rights* with Tom Hanks and the Writers Guild Award nominated *Maya and Marty* with Maya Rudolph and Martin Short. Most recently, Bauman has entered the highly lucrative world of musical theatre and contributed material to the fraudulently “won” Biden 2020 campaign. He resides in Los Angeles with his far more talented wife, Joanna Calo, their spectacular daughter, Ivy (5), and their sweet yet destructive son, Charlie (3).

**Monica Saunders-Weinberg** (Producer) has an extensive professional and creative portfolio – from business and real estate to philanthropy and the performing arts. Saunders-Weinberg has over 26 years of experience working on the board of The Terrace Tower Group where she is the Co-Owner and joint Deputy Chair. The Terrace Tower Group is a privately owned, leading property development company with various investments in Australia and the United States. A passionate philanthropist, Saunders-Weinberg collaborates with numerous charities globally. She is a founding partner of The Growth Project—an initiative that brings emerging charities and business leaders together for maximum positive social impact. She also heads her family's charitable arm, The Saunders Foundation, cultivating its mission for the last 25 years and spearheading its day-to-day operations. Monica chaired the Sydney Children's Hospital Gold Dinner Committee from 2019 – 2021, presiding over the largest charity event in Australia, and breaking several Australian fundraising records. Saunders-Weinberg continues to work closely with a wide range of charities and is

hugely passionate about philanthropy and the arts. Saunders-Weinberg recently teamed up with Award winning producer Bruna Papandrea's Made Up Stories to executive produce the feature film, *Addition*, and to develop a film adaptation of Fiona McIntosh's bestselling book, *The Pearl Thief*. Monica resides in Sydney with her husband, Richard, where they are devoted parents to their three children.

**Anthony “Brew” Brewster** (Music Director) was born in Santa Monica, California. He developed an enriched soulful style by singing and playing the piano and trumpet in church. As a lead member in two of Los Angeles' most seminal acts, Fishbone and The Untouchables, Brewster showcased his wide range for developing, arranging, and producing skills for some of today's top artists.

**Miss James Alsop** (Choreographer) most recently contributed choreography to the Renaissance World Tour and you can see her movement direction on Kim Kardashian and Emma Roberts on the most current season of *American Horror Story: Delicate*. The Whitney Houston biopic *I Wanna Dance With Somebody* marks her feature film choreographic debut. She choreographed the acclaimed Peacock musical TV series *Girls5eva*, executive produced by Tina Fey as well as the #1 Netflix series *Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*. Her choreography has also been featured on *Pose*, *Soundtrack*, *Gossip Girl*, and the upcoming season of *Emily in Paris*. Her work can also be seen in the Kerry Washington sitcom *Unprisoned*.

She began her career as co-choreographer of Beyoncé's videos, tour, and promotional materials for “Who Run the World (Girls),” “Dance For You,” and “Love on Top.” She also assisted in choreographing “Booty” by Jennifer Lopez and worked with Paul Thomas Anderson for the HAIM music video “Just A Little of Your Love.” After choreographing the entire season of *Maya & Marty*, she was asked by Tina Fey and Jeff Richmond to choreograph season three of *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* and has since worked for shows on NBC, Showtime, Netflix, and others. When not working with top stars, she teaches around the country and world, educating young artists and dancers to be who they are in their art form and love it.

**TheaterWorksUSA's Production Of**  
***El Otro Oz***  
**Book by Mando Alvarado and Tommy Newman**  
**Music & Lyrics by Jaime Lozano and Tommy Newman**

**Kirk Douglas Theatre | March 29 to April 13, 2025**

***El Otro Oz***, a bilingual musical, has book by Mando Alvarado and Tommy Newman and music and lyrics by Jaime Lozano and Tommy Newman.

Click your heels together tres veces and take a transformative journey with this salsa, merengue, and Mexican folk-infused musical inspired by *The Wizard of Oz*. As her fifteenth birthday approaches, Dora, a contemporary Latiné teenager, struggles with her family's ideas about tradition and dreads her impending quinceañera! But, when Dora gets swept away to a strange new land, she learns how to celebrate her unique rhythm and embrace her cultural identity.

Musical Director Jaime Lozano said in *El Norte*, “La historia se centra en Dora (Dorothy en ‘El Mago de Oz’), una joven mexico-americana que al cumplir 15 años se siente perdida en medio de las dos culturas; rechaza sus raíces mexicanas porque sólo quiere ser estadounidense. A través del viaje que hace Dora buscará descubrir su cultura y empieza a amar realmente lo que es ella y entiende los sacrificios que hizo su madre para darle una mejor vida en Estados Unidos.”

*“The story focuses on Dora (Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*), a young Mexican-American girl who, upon turning 15, feels lost in the middle of two cultures; She rejects her Mexican roots because she just wants to be American. Through the journey that Dora takes she will seek to discover her culture and begins to really love what she is and understands the sacrifices that her mother made to give her a better life in the United States.”*

The *New York Daily News* said, “\*\*\*\* The delightful new Oz-themed kids musical, *El Otro Oz*, proves there's still lessons to be learned traveling down this popular pathway. Likewise, there's lots of magic still stirring inside those famous ruby slippers whose GPS is permanently set on Home.”

The *New York Post* said, “¡EXCELENTE! Imagine *The Wizard of Oz* spiked with a little salsa and merengue. ¡QUE DIVERTIDO! You've pretty much summed up *El Otro Oz*, a fun new riff on L. Frank Baum's classic. With a healthy sprinkling of Spanish words and phrases thrown into the mix, it also makes a handy language guide. Kids and their adult chaperones alike will have no trouble easing down this camino amarillo.”

*Time Out New York Kids* said, “\*\*\*\* A spicy new twist on *The Wizard of Oz*. Every little girl in the audience will want to be Dora and hopefully they'll all take the lesson she learns to heart: We all have our own unique rhythm, but we'll never find it if we don't start dancing.”

The orchestrations and arrangements are by Salomon Lerner and Jaime Lozano; scenic design by Frank J. Oliva; costume design by Christopher Vergara; puppet design by Jessica Scott; original choreography by Andrea Guajardo; and original direction by Elena Araoz.

TheaterWorksUSA has led the Theater for Young and Family Audiences movement in New York City and across North America for over half a century. At TWUSA, they believe that access to art—and theater, in particular—is vital for our youth. Since 1961, the 501(c)3 not-for-profit has captured the imaginations of 100 million new and veteran theatergoers with an award-winning repertoire of over 140 original plays and musicals.

**Center Theatre Group**, one of the nation's preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles' leading not-for-profit theatre company, which, under the leadership of Artistic Director Snehal Desai, Managing Director / CEO Meghan Pressman, and Producing Director Douglas C. Baker, programs the Mark Taper Forum and the Ahmanson Theatre at The Music Center in Downtown Los Angeles, and the Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City. Center Theatre Group is one of the country's leading producers of ambitious new works through commissions and world premiere productions and a leader in interactive community engagement and education programs that reach across generations, demographics, and circumstances to serve Los Angeles. Founded in 1967, Center Theatre Group has produced more than 700 productions across its three stages, including such iconic shows as *Zoot Suit*; *Angels in America*; *The Kentucky Cycle*; *Biloxi Blues*; *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*; *Children of a Lesser God*; *Curtains*; *The Drowsy Chaperone*; *9 to 5: The Musical*; and *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*. [CenterTheatreGroup.org](http://CenterTheatreGroup.org)

The **S. Mark Taper Foundation**, founded in 1989, is a private family foundation dedicated to enhancing the quality of people's lives by supporting nonprofit organizations and their work in our communities. The S. Mark Taper Foundation is committed to grantmaking that aligns with the values of diversity, equity and inclusion.

**Bank of America** is Center Theatre Group's 2024/25 “One CTG” Season Sponsor. Bank of America believes in the power of the arts to help economies thrive, to educate and enrich societies, and to

create greater cultural understanding. For over 20 years, the company has supported Center Theatre Group's innovative Education and Community Partnerships programs and world-class productions.

**American Express** is the official credit card for Center Theatre Group.

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January 23, 2025