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Sarasota Jewish Theatre Presents Gabriel V. Ortiz's New Play "Kaddish for the Barrio" October 7-11

SARASOTA, Fla. (Sept. 10, 2026) – Sarasota Jewish Theatre (SJT) is pleased to present a new play, "Kaddish for the Barrio," from October 7 to 11 at The Sarasota Players. Written by Sarasota-based actor and playwright Gabriel V. Ortiz, this bold drama explores guilt, redemption, and the search for light in a world shattered by violence. For more information and to buy tickets, visit SarasotaJewishTheatre.org.

"Kaddish for the Barrio" by Gabriel V. Ortiz is the moving story of a haunted young Latino gang member (Brandon Billings), his sister Elena (Jennifer Vasquez), and an aging rabbi (Leonard Rubinstein) who form an unlikely bond inside a crumbling East L.A. synagogue now used as a community center. This new drama explores guilt, redemption, and the search for light in a world shattered by violence. Blending humor, poetry, rap, and prayer, it asks whether broken souls can find a way to heal. Directed by Preston Boyd, this show will be presented at The Sarasota Players, 3501 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Performances are October 9 and 11 at 1:30 p.m.; and October 7, 8, and 10 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$36.

Ortiz stated, "I grew up in the barrios of Los Angeles in the early 1980s, in a world riddled with drugs, addiction, and gang violence. Several of my brothers were cholos, or gang members. For years, I wanted to bring the world of the cholo to the stage with the humanity I knew it deserved."

He continued, "'Kaddish for the Barrio' asks what happens when two people from different worlds are willing to see each other, and what faith means when life becomes too much. When violence tears through a community, we offer our 'thoughts and prayers.' But do we really pray? Do we meditate on our own part? Are we doing enough to heal our communities and ourselves?"

Carole Kleinberg, SJT's artistic director, said, "Gabe Ortiz and I have been friends for over 20 years, and I respect his talent, heart, and professionalism. Last season we cast him in a play that focused on a chance meeting between a Latino bartender and a Jewish man on Yom Kippur. That experience planted the seed from which this emotionally powerful play grew. I was astonished at how quickly the ideas coalesced and blossomed into a beautiful play."

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit SarasotaJewishTheatre.org.

Sarasota Jewish Theatre's 2026-2027 season is supported in part by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, The Exchange, the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, and Manatee Community Foundation.

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Sarasota Jewish Theatre (SJT) celebrates Jewish life and culture in all its beauty and complexity. SJT audiences enjoy contemporary and classic plays and programs which highlight the uniqueness and universality of Jewish heritage, values, humor, and cultural life. SJT is a proud member of the Alliance for Jewish Theatre. Visit sarasotajewishtheatre.org to learn more.