Somewhere Between Brecht & Cantinflas
The Origin and Evolution of El Teatro Campesino

A Presentation by
Luis Valdez
Internationally Renowned Playwright, Director, and Filmmaker

Luis Valdez is regarded as one of the most important and influential American playwrights living today. His internationally renowned, and Obie award-winning theatre company, El Teatro Campesino (The Farm Workers’ Theater) was founded by Valdez in 1965 in the heat of the United Farm Workers (UFW) struggle and the Great Delano Grape Strike in California’s Central Valley. Creating biting satirical actos (short plays) on the picket lines, the company of striking farm workers quickly learned to use humor as a non-violent weapon. Two years later, El Teatro Campesino would become an independent non-profit cultural center that helped inspire and define the Chicano Movement.

Valdez created documentaries and specials on PBS, and went on to write and direct feature films, notably “Zoot Suit” and “La Bamba.” His involvement with Cesar Chavez, the UFW, and the early Chicano Movement left an indelible mark that remains embodied in his impressive span of work. A half century down the road, from picket lines to Broadway, and from university campuses to Hollywood studios, he looks back at the trajectory of his career as an American maestro.

Valdez just staged his newest play “Valley of the Heart” at his company’s playhouse in San Juan Bautista, California. About to celebrate El Teatro’s 50th anniversary in 2015, he examines the origins and evolution of his theater, which he originally described as existing “somewhere between Brecht and Cantinflas,” referencing the German playwright and Mexican comedy actor.

Thursday, October 16, 2014, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Free and Open to the Public
Orvis Auditorium, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

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