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**COMPañERAS, ROUSING DOCUMENTARY ABOUT AMERICA'S FIRST ALL-FEMALE MARIACHI BAND, TO HAVE ITS BROADCAST PREMIERE ON THE EMMY AWARD-WINNING PBS SERIES INDEPENDENT LENS ON TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2008, AT 10:00 PM**

(San Francisco, CA)—**COMPañERAS** is a passionate profile of America's first all-female mariachi band, Mariachi Reyna de Los Angeles. Founded in 1994, the 12 members of Reyna shatter age-old stereotypes by putting a uniquely female twist on a beloved musical genre. In an arena that has traditionally been male-dominated, these women are true pioneers, literally giving voice to Latinas with their fiery performances. Directed and produced by Elizabeth Massie and Matthew Buzzell, **COMPañERAS** will air nationally on the Emmy Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard, on Tuesday, April 1, 2008, at 10:00 PM (check local listings).

Beginning with a brief history of mariachi and the founding of Mariachi Reyna, **COMPañERAS** then alternates between heart-stirring performances and backstage drama. Interwoven throughout are the stories of two women: 19-year-old Angelica, a devoted groupie of Reyna, who comes to Los Angeles to fulfill her dream of auditioning for the group; and Cindy, the group's leader and only non-Latina, who struggles to assert her authority without alienating her fellow musicians. As the stories of Cindy and Angelica unfold over the course of the film, we see how the personal lives of the Reynas often conspire against the demands of their chosen profession. The issues raised are universal to women everywhere: the daily struggle to balance family demands with career, earn as much as their male counterparts and deal with emotional conflict. But differences of class and culture quickly melt away under the bright lights as the women of Mariachi Reyna raise their voices and instruments to break new musical ground, delivering performances alternately humorous and heart-wrenching in the best mariachi tradition.

To learn more about the film and the issues, visit the companion website for **COMPañERAS** at *Independent Lens* online. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions. Visit the **COMPañERAS** companion website [pbs.org/independentlens/companeras/](http://pbs.org/independentlens/companeras/).

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### **About The Filmmakers**

**Elizabeth Massie** is a documentary producer, director and writer. Over the past six years, she has written and produced shows for more than 30 nonfiction television series, including *Lock Up: Inside America's Prisons* for MSNBC; *A Face for Yulce* for TLC (winner of FREDDIE, HUGO and CINE Golden Eagle awards); *On the Inside* for Discovery; Lifetime's *Final Justice with Erin Brockovich*; and many others. She co-wrote and co-produced *Out of the Shadow*, a feature documentary about a woman's lifelong battle with schizophrenia and the mental health system. The film is currently airing on PBS affiliates nationwide and was featured in *People* magazine. She also was the writer for *Emmanuel's Gift*, a feature documentary narrated by Oprah Winfrey. Theatrically released in 2005 and distributed on DVD, the film tells the inspirational story of Emmanuel Yeboah, a disabled cyclist from Ghana. The film received the 2006 Media Access Award for Outstanding Documentary. Massie holds an M.F.A. in directing from the American Film Institute.

**Matthew Buzzell** is an award-winning independent documentary filmmaker. His first feature documentary, *Jimmy Scott: If You Only Knew*, is an intimate portrait of jazz legend Little Jimmy Scott; the film aired on *Independent Lens* and won the series's 2004 Audience Award. It was released on DVD by Rhino Home Video. His most recent documentary, *Tell Me Do You Miss Me*, about the last tour of indie rock band Luna, premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and is now distributed by Rhino Home Video. Also featured at the Tribeca Festival, Buzzell's short documentary *Putting the River in Reverse* follows Elvis Costello and Alain Toussaint as they record their joint album in post-Katrina New Orleans. The film was released on DVD by Verve in conjunction with the album release. Buzzell also holds an M.F.A. in directing from the American Film Institute.

### **About CHC Productions**

CHC Productions was founded in 1999 by filmmakers Matthew Buzzell and Elizabeth Massie as a documentary production company that would create provocative films about complex social topics, with a special focus on women's issues. Their first film, *Who Cares About Girls?* was selected by the Council on Foundations as one of the ten best foundation-funded films of 2000. It explored the impact of media culture on the self-esteem of preteen and teenage girls. The Heinz Foundation funded their next film, *What a Girl Wants*, which delves more deeply into the issues raised in *Who Cares About Girls?* It is distributed by the Media Education Foundation and has been sold to high schools and universities nationwide. It screened at many film festivals, including Slamdance, Docside DocFest, Dallas Film and Video Festival, and the New York Guerilla Film Festival. It was also featured on *Oprah* in 2002.

### **About Independent Lens**

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10:00 PM on PBS, hosted by Terrence Howard. The acclaimed anthology series features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities and moments in history. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

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