

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE GALA ON MARCH 17 TO CELEBRATE INSTITUTION'S EXTRAORDINARY MOMENT ON BROADWAY

ACCLAIMED ARTISTS TITUSS BURGESS, NIKKI M. JAMES, VINCENT RODRIGUEZ AND JEANNA DE WAAL TO PERFORM FAVORITES FROM POPULAR PLAYHOUSE PRODUCTIONS, INCLUDING A SNEAK PEEK AT THE UPCOMING WORLD-PREMIERE MUSICAL DIANA, AT ANNUAL EVENT SUPPORTING NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse's annual Gala will take place on **Saturday, March 17** in the Playhouse's Potiker Theatre in the Joan and Irwin Jacobs Theatre District. Chaired once again by **Debby Jacobs**, the event supports the Playhouse's new play development and education and outreach programs.

The 2018 Gala will celebrate this extraordinary moment in the institution's history, with **six Playhouse-born productions moving to Broadway** during the last year, including *Come From Away*, which received seven Tony Award nominations and a win for Playhouse Artistic Director Christopher Ashley for Best Director of a Musical; Ayad Akhtar's *JUNK*, Paula Vogel's *Indecent*; John Leguizamo's *Latin History for Morons*, and the upcoming *Escape to Margaritaville*, also directed by Ashley, and *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical*. The Playhouse will also have two shows running off-Broadway this season: *Jersey Boys* and *Miss You Like Hell*.

The event will also be highlighted by a series of special performances by such acclaimed Playhouse artists as Emmy Award nominee **Tituss Burgess** (Playhouse's *The Wiz*, *Jersey Boys*; TV's *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*); Tony Award winner **Nikki M. James** (Playhouse's *The Wiz*, Broadway's *Book of Mormon*), **Vincent Rodriguez** (Playhouse's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*; *Xanadu*, TV's *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*); and **Jeanna de Waal** (Playhouse's *Diana* workshop; Broadway's *Kinky Boots*, *Waitress*).

The Gala will begin at 6:00pm with a cocktail party in the Sheila and Hughes Potiker Theatre Lobby. Guests will then move into the Potiker Theatre to enjoy a specially-prepared, seasonal menu crafted by Chef **Jeffrey Strauss/Pamplemousse Grille**, paired with hand-selected wines to create an exquisite culinary experience. Throughout the evening, the Potiker Theatre will come alive with exclusive live musical performances by Burgess, James, Rodriguez and de Waal, offering a selection of songs from favorite Playhouse productions, as well as a sneak peek at the upcoming world-premiere musical *Diana*.

The event will conclude with an after-party from 10pm to midnight, where guests can continue to mix, mingle, dance and enjoy a special live performance with internationally-renowned EDM artist **MAKO**. After-party only tickets are also available to the public for \$100 and include an open bar by Snake Oil Cocktail Co. and late night bites from Pamplemousse Grill.

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For guests at the \$5000 Commanderie and \$2500 Sommelier ticket levels, the Playhouse has lined up a group of special wine hosts to curate a true sensory experience from their private wine collections. Each host will take their table on a journey of their choosing: be it by region, varietal or pairings based on their expertise. Wine Hosts include Gail & Ralph Bryan, Lisa & David Casey, Tatiana Zunshine & Miles Grant, Debby & Hal Jacobs, Joan & Irwin Jacobs, Genevieve & Paul Jacobs, Sheri Jamieson, Lynelle & Bill Lynch, Stacy Jacobs & John Plewes, Vivien & Jeffrey Ressler, Colette & Ivor Royston, Lise Wilson & Steve Strauss, as well as **Wine Host Chairs Marilyn & Michael Yeatts**.

Lead sponsorship for the Gala is provided by **Qualcomm, Van Cleef & Arpels, Merrill Lynch, UC San Diego** and **Show Imaging, Inc.**

Proceeds from the Gala support the Playhouse's acclaimed Education and Outreach initiatives, as well as its New Play Development programs, such as Page To Stage, DNA New Work Series, Without Walls program and artist commissions. For information and tickets (ranging from \$500 to \$5000) to the Playhouse Gala, please contact gala@ljp.org.

La Jolla Playhouse is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what's new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Currently led by 2017 Tony Award-winning Artistic Director Christopher Ashley and Managing Director Michael S. Rosenberg, the Playhouse was founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer. Playhouse artists and audiences have taken part in the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 95 world premieres, commissioning 50 new works, and sending 30 productions to Broadway – with two more set to open Spring 2018 – garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, including the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. LaJollaPlayhouse.org.

Artist Bios

Emmy and SAG-nominated actor, musician and writer **Tituss Burgess** currently stars as 'Titus Andromedon' in the hit comedy series *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (Emmy nomination; SAG and Critics' Choice TV Awards). Other television credits include *30 Rock*, *A Gifted Man*, *Blue Bloods* and *Royal Pains*. On the big screen, he recently lent his voice to *The Angry Birds Movie* and *Smurfs: The Lost Village*. A veteran of the stage, Burgess made his Broadway debut in 2005 as 'Eddie' in *Good Vibrations*. Since, he has held many memorable roles on Broadway, including 'Hal Miller' in *Jersey Boys*, 'Sebastian the Crab' in *The Little Mermaid*, and 'Nicely-Nicely Johnson' in the 2009 revival of *Guys and Dolls*. Burgess also performed in La Jolla Playhouse's productions of *The Wiz* and *Jersey Boys*. He has headlined major symphonies and cabaret venues throughout the world and debuted his album *Comfortable* in 2012, for which he wrote the music and lyrics for ten of the eleven songs.

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Nikki M. James starred in La Jolla Playhouse's production of *The Wiz*. Her Broadway credits include: *Book of Mormon* (2011 Tony Award), the 2014 revival of *Les Miserables*, *All Shook Up* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Additional theater credits: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Caesar & Cleopatra* (opposite Christopher Plummer), *Twelfth Night*, *Preludes*, *Bernarda Alba*, *Fetch Clay, Make Man*, *Wonderful Town* (LA Opera). Select Film/TV: *Lucky Stiff*, *The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby*, *Braindead*, *The Good Wife*, *The Good Fight*, *Bull*, *Instinct*, *30 Rock*, *The Blacklist*; (Animation) *Welcome To The Wayne*.

Vincent Rodriguez III currently stars as Josh Chan in the critically-acclaimed Emmy and Golden Globe-winning CW musical comedy *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*. Originally from a suburb of San Francisco, Rodriguez grew up studying music, martial arts, magic, and performing arts. Shortly after graduating from Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts, he booked his first audition dancing in the ensemble of the Broadway first national tour of *42nd Street*. Once the tour ended, Rodriguez decided to make the big move east to New York City. That fortuitous relocation resulted in roles in Broadway first national tours as well as at regional theaters all over the U.S. His stage credits include the first national tours of *Xanadu*, *Anything Goes* and the original cast of *Irving Berlin's White Christmas* (original cast recording). Additional theater credits include *Oklahoma!* (Arena Stage), Disney's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at La Jolla Playhouse (also at Paper Mill Playhouse, studio cast recording), and the Public Theater's *Here Lies Love*. On TV, he has guest starred on *Hostages*, *Donny!*, *Another Period*, *Adam Ruins Everything* and *Designated Survivor*.

Jeanna de Wall's credits include Broadway's *American Idiot* and *Kinky Boots*, the national tour of *Wicked*, the American Repertory Theater productions of *Finding Neverland* and *Waitress*, and the off-Broadway production and cast album recording of *Carrie*. TV credits include *The Jim Gaffigan Show* and Marvel's *Iron Fist*. *SWEPT*, a short film she wrote/produced/directed and starred in won The Audience Choice award at The New Filmmakers Festival, NY in 2016. She is the founder of BROADWAY WEEKENDS, the first musical theatre camp experience for adults. For more information visit <http://www.broadwayweekends.com>. Instagram and Twitter: @thebigdewaal

Los Angeles-based composer, songwriter, and record producer **Alex Seaver** has made an immediate mark with a unique and versatile approach spanning genres and influences of music. The Juilliard-trained artist has earned 150-million combined streams to date as frontman for Pop/Electronic project *Mako*, while contributing music across film, television, video games, radio, and streaming services. As a performer, the 28-year old has toured internationally with artist David Guetta, performed at the Coachella and Lollapalooza music festivals, in addition to headline tours across North America and orchestral appearances at Carnegie Hall. Alex's work as a pop songwriter has earned him credits with Avicii, Steve Angello, Alan Walker, Madison Beer, R3hab, and Against The Current. His venture into composing for video games can be heard in collaboration with the Riot Games' hit *League Of Legends*, most recently evolving into performances at their *Worlds* events, including a headlining appearance at the recent games in Beijing, China. As a commercial composer, Alex has written for international campaigns with Coca-Cola, Dodge, and Fruit Of The Loom, and is published by Sony/ATV.

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