GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

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REHEARSALS BEGIN FOR LOS ANGELES PREMIERE OF "PURPOSE" AT GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

FEATURING ALANA ARENAS, GLENN DAVIS, JON MICHAEL HILL, LaTANYA RICHARDSON JACKSON, HARRY LENNIX, NIJA OKORO AND KARA YOUNG

WRITTEN BY BRANDEN JACOBS-JENKINS AND DIRECTED BY PHYLICIA RASHAD

PREVIEWS BEGIN NOVEMBER 11 - OPENING NIGHT IS NOVEMBER 19

NOW EXTENDED THROUGH DECEMBER 20

LOS ANGELES (October 20, 2026) – Rehearsals begin today for Geffen Playhouse's Los Angeles premiere of the Broadway/Steppenwolf Theatre Company production of the 2025 Tony Award winner for Best Play and 2025 Pulitzer Prize for Drama winner, *Purpose*, written by **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins** (*Appropriate*, *Everybody*) and directed by **Phylicia Rashad** (*A Raisin in the Sun*, *Skeleton Crew*). The production will launch its Los Angeles run featuring the full original Broadway cast.

The original Broadway cast of the Broadway/Steppenwolf Theatre Company production of *Purpose* includes **Alana Arenas** (*Windfall*, *David Makes Man*) as Morgan Jasper; **Glenn Davis** (*Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*, *King James*) as Solomon "Junior" Jasper; **Jon Michael Hill** (*The Mountaintop*, *Superior Donuts*) as Nazareth "Naz" Jasper; **LaTanya Richardson Jackson** (*Angry, Raucous, and Shamelessly Gorgeous*; *A Raisin in the Sun*) as Claudine Jasper; **Harry Lennix** (*The Matrix* series, *Justice League*) as Solomon "Sonny" Jasper; and **Kara Young** (*Is God Is*, *Purlie Victorious*) as Aziza Houston**.**

Joining the original Broadway cast will be **Nija Okoro** (*Jitney*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*), who will take over the role of Aziza Houston beginning with the 6:30 p.m. performance on November 29.

Previews for *Purpose* begin Wednesday, November 11, 2026, in the Gil Cates Theater at Geffen Playhouse. Opening night is Thursday, November 19, 2026.

Due to popular demand, *Purpose* has been extended through Sunday, December 20, 2026, adding one additional week of performances.

Meet the Jaspers: generations of a powerful Black political family under one roof where nothing stays buried for long. When their youngest son returns home, instincts kick in to protect their public image of leadership and moral authority, and fractures soon appear as private grievances, betrayals, and long-simmering questions of identity rise to the surface.

Direct from Broadway, this 2025 Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize–winning play makes its Los Angeles debut with the original Broadway cast, directed by the incomparable Phylicia Rashad. Both intimate and epic, *Purpose* is provocative, often hilarious, and ultimately a devastating exploration of legacy and the cost of believing in something bigger than yourself.

Originally Produced on Broadway by David Stone, Debra Martin Chase, Marc Platt, LaChanze, Rashad V. Chambers, Aaron Glick, Universal Theatrical Group, Eastern Standard Time, Trate Productions, Nancy Nagel Gibbs, James L. Nederlander, John Gore, ATG Entertainment, The Shubert Organization, and Steppenwolf Theatre Company.

Geffen Playhouse is supported, in part, by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Department of Arts and Culture.

Geffen Playhouse is proud to welcome members of local arts, non-profit, and service organizations during our Community Meetup Nights. These special evenings offer patrons the chance to connect with community partners and discover more about their missions and values. A full list of participating organizations can be found here.

The Broadway/Steppenwolf Theatre Company Production of
PURPOSE
Written by **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**
Directed by **Phylicia Rashad**

Previews: November 11, 2026 – November 18, 2026
Opening Night: November 19, 2026
Closing Night: December 20, 2026

CAST
Alana Arenas as Morgan Jasper
Glenn Davis as Solomon "Junior" Jasper
Jon Michael Hill as Nazareth "Naz" Jasper
LaTanya Richardson Jackson as Claudine Jasper
Harry Lennix as Solomon "Sonny" Jasper
Nija Okoro as Aziza Houston (11/29 6:30 p.m. performance –12/20)
Kara Young as Aziza Houston (11/11–11/29 1:00 p.m. performance)

The role of “Aziza Houston” will be performed by Kara Young through the November 29, 1:00 p.m. performance and by Nija Okoro beginning with the November 29, 6:30 p.m. performance.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Scenic Designer **Todd Rosenthal**
Costume Designer **Dede Ayite**
Lighting Designer **Amith Chandrashaker**
Sound Designers **Rob Milburn & Michael Bodeen**
Hair & Wig Designer **Nikiya Mathis**
Assistant Director **David Blackwell**
Dramaturg **Jonathan L. Green**
Production Stage Manager **Tiffany N. Robinson**
Assistant Stage Manager **Lisa Toudic**
Chicago Casting **JC Clementz, CSA**
Broadway Casting **Calleri Jensen Davis**
Additional Casting **Phyllis Schuringa, CSA**

UNDERSTUDIES

Gregg T. Daniel as u/s Solomon "Sonny" Jasper
Candace Nicholas-Lippman as u/s Aziza Houston / Morgan Jasper
Christian Telesmar as u/s Nazareth "Naz" Jasper / Solomon "Junior" Jasper
Marie-Françoise Theodore as u/s Claudine Jasper

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Monday, Tuesday	No performance*
Wednesday, Thursday	7:30 p.m.**
Friday	8:00 p.m.
Saturday	2:00 and 8:00 p.m.
Sunday	1:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.***

* There will be Tuesday 7:30 p.m. performances on December 1, 8, and 15.
** There will be no performances on Wednesday, November 25, and Thursday, November 26.
*** There will be no Sunday 6:30 p.m. performances on November 15 and December 6, 13, and 20.

LOCATION

Gil Cates Theater at Geffen Playhouse
10886 Le Conte Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets currently priced at $57.00 - $184.00 (subject to change). Available by phone at 310.208.2028 or online at www.geffenplayhouse.org. Fees may apply.

All Geffen Playhouse productions are intended for an adult audience; children under 10 years of age will not be admitted.

Rush tickets for each day's performance are made available to the general public one hour before showtime at the box office. $40.00 General/$20.00 Student.

COLLEGE AUDIENCES

Through a variety of events and other opportunities, Geffen Playhouse welcomes college students to experience the live storytelling presented on our stages. We are proud of our association with UCLA's School of Theater, Film, and Television, and open our doors to all college students throughout Los Angeles. More information is available at www.geffenplayhouse.org/college.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins (Playwright)

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins is a writer and theatre artist whose plays include *Purpose*, *Appropriate*, *The Comeuppance*, *Girls*, *Everybody*, *War*, *Gloria*, *An Octoroon*, and *Neighbors*. He is a Professor in the Practice at Yale University and serves as Vice President of the Dramatists Guild Council. He has been the recipient of two Tony Awards, a Pulitzer Prize, the MacArthur Fellowship, the Windham-Campbell Prize for Drama, and the inaugural Tennessee Williams Award.

Phylicia Rashad (Director)

Ms. Rashad's directing credits include: *Purpose* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company and Broadway), *Our Lady of 121st Street*, *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Fences*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *Immediate Family*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Roommate*, and *Four Little Girls*. A two-time Tony and Drama Desk Award winner for her performances in *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Skeleton Crew*, in 2016 she was inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame and also received the Lucille Lortel Award for her performance as "Shelah" in Tarell Alvin McCraney's *Head of Passes*. Producing credits include the PBS film *The Old Settler* and the recent Broadway revival of Ossie Davis' *Purlie Victorious*. Ms. Rashad is Dean Emerita of The Chadwick A. Boseman College of Fine Arts at Howard University.

Alana Arenas (Morgan Jasper)

Alana Arenas is an award-winning actress who joined the Steppenwolf Theatre Company ensemble in 2007. Her recent Steppenwolf appearances include *Purpose*, for which she was awarded the Theatre World Award for Outstanding Debut Performance on Broadway. She won both the Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Featured actress along with the Clarence Derwent Award for her work in *Head of Passes*. Along with *Purpose*, she has appeared in over 25 Steppenwolf productions and was most recently seen in Tarell Alvin McCraney's *Windfall*. Alana's work has also been seen on the stages of the American Theatre Company, Lookingglass Theatre Company, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Black Ensemble Theater, and Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, among others. On television, she starred as "Gloria" in OWN's Peabody Award–winning series *David Makes Man* (created by Tarell Alvin McCraney). Additional television and film credits include *Canal Street*, *Crisis*, *Boss*, *The Beast*, *Kabuku Rides*, and *Lioness of Lisabi*.

Glenn Davis (Solomon "Junior" Jasper)
Glenn Davis is an actor, producer, and Artistic Director of Steppenwolf Theatre Company alongside Audrey Francis, where he has been an ensemble member since 2017. Steppenwolf credits include: *Downstate*, *The Christians*, *You Got Older*, *The Brother/Sister Plays*, *Head of Passes*, *King James*, *Describe the Night*, *Purpose*, *Windfall*, and most recently *Topdog/Underdog*. Broadway credits include: *Purpose* and *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*. Off-Broadway credits include: *Transfers* (MCC Theater), *Wig Out!* (Vineyard Theatre), *Downstate* (Playwrights Horizons), and *King James* (Manhattan Theatre Club). Other regional credits include: *Moscow x6* (Williamstown Theatre Festival). International credits include: *Downstate* (National Theatre); *Edward II*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *As You Like It* (Stratford Festival); and *Othello* (The Shakespeare Company). Television credits include: *Billions*, *24*, *The Unit*, *Jericho*, and *The Good Wife*. Glenn is an Artistic Associate at the Young Vic in London and at the Vineyard Theatre in New York. He is also a partner in Cast Iron Entertainment. In 2021, Glenn founded The Chatham Grove Company along with his producing partner Tarell Alvin McCraney.

Jon Michael Hill (Nazareth "Naz" Jasper)
Jon was last seen on Broadway as "Nazareth" in the Tony Award–winning production of *Purpose* (Tony nomination). Other Broadway credits include: *Superior Donuts* (Tony nomination) and *Pass Over* (Lucille Lortel nomination). Jon has been an ensemble member at Steppenwolf Theatre Company since 2007. Steppenwolf: *Purpose*, *Superior Donuts*, *Pass Over*, *The Tempest*, *Constellations*, *Head of Passes*, *True West*, and more. Other theatre: *The Mountaintop* (Geffen Playhouse), The Refuge Plays (Roundabout Theatre Company/New York Theatre Workshop), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Public Theater). Jon spent 7 seasons on *Elementary* (CBS/Hulu) and can be seen in *Maximum Pleasure Guaranteed* on Apple TV. Film/TV: *Widows*, *A Man in Full*, *61st Street*.

LaTanya Richardson Jackson (Claudine Jasper)
LaTanya Richardson Jackson is a three-time Tony Award–nominated actress, director, and producer. At the Geffen, she most recently directed Pearl Cleage's *Angry, Raucous, and Shamelessly Gorgeous*. With this production of *Purpose*, she reprises the same acclaimed role she originated on Broadway, earning Tony, Drama League, and Outer Critics Circle nominations. Her Broadway credits also include *A Raisin in the Sun* (Tony nomination), *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. She made history as the first woman to direct an August Wilson play on Broadway (*The Piano Lesson*) and is currently Vice Chair of The American Theatre Wing. In honor of her career and her philanthropic endeavors, she was a Black Women on Broadway Legacy Recipient and a 2026 *ESSENCE* Black Women in Hollywood honoree. A Spelman graduate, she and her husband recently opened the college's LaTanya Richardson Jackson and Samuel L. Jackson Performing Arts Center. They have an exceptionally talented daughter, Zoe Dove.

Harry Lennix (Solomon "Sonny" Jasper)
Harry Lennix earned a Tony Award nomination for playing "Solomon 'Sonny' Jasper" in Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *Purpose*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award for Best Play. He made his Broadway debut in August Wilson's *Radio Golf*, and his stage credits include Off-Broadway's

Titus Andronicus and regional productions of *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Othello*, and *The Great Gatsby*. He won the inaugural Ollie Award for playing "Malcolm X" in *The Meeting* at Chicago's Goodman Theatre, and returned there this past March as associate director and musical director of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, in which he previously starred as "Levee." His film credits include Zack Snyder's *Justice League*, *Man of Steel*, *The Matrix* franchise, *Ray*, and *The Five Heartbeats*. On television, he is best known for his decade-long role as "Harold Cooper" on NBC's *The Blacklist*, with additional appearances in *Commander in Chief*, *Billions*, and *Dollhouse*.

Nija Okoro (Aziza Houston [11/29 6:30 p.m. performance –12/20)]
Nija Okoro is thrilled to be joining this production of *Purpose* and reuniting with director Phylicia Rashad. Theatre: *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (LADCC Award for Best Lead Performance) and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, both directed by Rashad; the National Broadway Tour of *Jitney*, directed by Ruben Santiago-Hudson, *The Legend of Georgia McBride* (Geffen Playhouse); and the world premiere of *Zoey's Perfect Wedding* by Matthew López. Additional theatre: *Two Trains Running*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *An Octoroon, Bossa Nova*, and *The Mountaintop*. Television: *9-1-1: Lone Star*, *The Deuce*, *Animal Kingdom*, *Southland*, and *ER*, with recurring roles on *Insecure*, *StartUp*, and *Monday Mornings*. Film: *Paradise* (upcoming), *Hollywood Stargirl*, *The Stay*, *ReBroken*, and *The Black Emperor of Broadway*. For her work, Nija has received six LA Drama Critics Circle Awards, as well as Ovation and Stage Raw honors. She is a Bronx native and graduate of The Juilliard School.

Kara Young (Aziza Houston [11/11–11/29 1:00 p.m. performance])
Kara Young made history twice by becoming the first Black performer to be nominated for a Tony four years in a row and for winning a Tony two years consecutively. Broadway: *Proof* (Drama League nomination), *Purpose* (Tony Award, Drama Desk Award, Drama League nomination, Outer Critics Circle nomination), *Purlie Victorious* (Tony Award, Outer Critics Circle Award, Drama Desk Award, Drama League nomination), *Cost of Living* (Tony nomination), *Clyde's* (Theatre World Award, Tony and Drama Desk nominations), Off-Broadway: *The Whoopi Monologues*, *Gruesome Playground Injuries*, *Table 17* (Lucille Lortell Award), *Twelfth Night* (Obie Award), *All The Natalie Portmans* (Lucille Lortel nomination), *Halfway Bitches Go Straight To Heaven*, *The New Englanders*, *The Revolving Cycles Truly and Steadily Roll'd*, *Syncing Ink*, and *Pretty Hunger*. Kara can be seen in Amazon's *I'm A Virgo* (Breakthrough Performance Indie Spirit nomination). She can also be seen co-starring in Aleshea Harris' Feature Film *Is God Is*.

PRODUCTION SPONSORS
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K Period Media Foundation

ABOUT GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE
Geffen Playhouse has been a hub of the Los Angeles theater scene since opening its doors in 1995. Noted for its intimacy and celebrated for its world-renowned mix of classic and contemporary plays, provocative new works and second productions, the not-for-profit organization continues to present a body of work that has garnered national recognition. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen maintains extensive education and community

engagement programs, designed to involve underserved young people and the community at large in the arts. Named in honor of entertainment mogul and philanthropist David Geffen, who made the initial donation to the theater, the company was founded by Gilbert Cates and is currently helmed by Executive Director/CEO Gil Cates, Jr., Artistic Director Tarell Alvin McCraney and Board Chair Mary Ann Cloyd. www.geffenplayhouse.org

ABOUT STEPPENWOLF THEATRE COMPANY

Steppenwolf Theatre is the nation's premier ensemble theater with 51 members who are among the top actors, playwrights and directors in the field. Thrilling, powerful, groundbreaking productions—from *Balm in Gilead* and *The Grapes of Wrath* to *August: Osage County*, *Downstate*, *The Brother/Sister Plays*, and *Purpose*—have made this theatre legendary. Founded in 1974 by Terry Kinney, Jeff Perry and Gary Sinise, Steppenwolf's artistic force remains rooted in the original vision of its founders: an artist-driven theatre, whose vitality is defined by its sharp appetite for bold and innovative work. While grounded in the Chicago community, more than 40 original Steppenwolf productions have enjoyed success nationally and internationally, including Broadway, Off-Broadway, London, Sydney, Galway, and Dublin. Steppenwolf's accolades include the National Medal of Arts, 14 Tony Awards, two Pulitzer Prize–winning commissions, and more. Led by Artistic Directors Glenn Davis and Audrey Francis, Executive Director E. Brooke Flanagan, and Board of Trustees Chair Keating Crown—Steppenwolf has, and continues to redefine the landscape of acting and performance.

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