

HOW ONE VOICE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD
THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE 2014-2015 SEASON
A CO-WORLD PREMIERE AND THREE WEST COAST PREMIERES

SWITZERLAND

WRITTEN BY JOANNA MURRAY-SMITH
 CO-WORLD PREMIERE WITH SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

THE NIGHT ALIVE

WRITTEN BY CONOR McPHERSON, DIRECTED BY RANDALL ARNEY
 WEST COAST PREMIERE

THE POWER OF DUFF

WRITTEN BY STEPHEN BELBER, DIRECTED BY PETER DUBOIS
 WEST COAST PREMIERE

**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS JEFFERSON,
 CHARLES DICKENS AND COUNT LEO TOLSTOY: DISCORD**

WRITTEN BY SCOTT CARTER

SEASON TO BE COMPLETED WITH AN ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION; PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED
CHOIR BOY, HERSHEY FELDER AS IRVING BERLIN, AND BAD JEWS

LOS ANGELES (April 17, 2014) – The Geffen Playhouse has announced four plays for the eight-play 2014-2015 season, including the Co-World Premiere, with the Sydney Theatre Company, of the Geffen commissioned, *Switzerland*, written by Joanna Murray-Smith (*The Female of the Species*); the West Coast Premieres of *The Night Alive*, written by Olivier and Evening Standard Award winner and Tony nominee Conor McPherson (*The Weir, The Seafarer*) and directed by Geffen Artistic Director Randall Arney; and *The Power of Duff*, written by Stephen Belber and directed by Peter DuBois (*Rapture, Blister, Burn*); and *The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord*, written by Scott Carter.

Previously, the Geffen announced the World Premiere of *Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin*, directed by Trevor Hay, and the West Coast Premieres of *Choir Boy* written by 2013 MacArthur Fellow Tarell Alvin McCraney, directed by Trip Cullman, and *Bad Jews*, written by Joshua Harmon and directed by Matt Shakman. The Geffen will announce the eighth production in the near future.

“Each play that we’ve put into this season has something specific and singular about it,” said Arney. “Taken together, an undeniable theme emerges. These writers, and the characters they’ve created, have distinct voices and the stories they tell explore how one voice can change the world. Through singing a song, writing a song, righting a wrong -- each of these plays is a battle cry to raise one’s voice.”

To renew or purchase season tickets, please call the subscriber hotline at 310.208.2028 (Monday - Friday 10:00am - 6:00pm; Saturday & Sunday 12:00pm - 6:00pm); for more information, please visit www.geffenplayhouse.com.

The season begins with the West Coast Premiere of Tarell Alvin McCraney's new play with gospel music, *Choir Boy* (September 16 - October 26, 2014), which had previous productions at Manhattan Theatre Club and London's Royal Court Theatre. The *London Guardian* said *Choir Boy* is "an exhilarating multi-layered new play." *Variety* said it is "a mighty coming-of-age play that deserves its kudos." McCraney is the author of *The Brother/Sister Plays* trilogy that premiered at the New York Public Theater and *Head of Passes* that premiered at Steppenwolf Theatre Company.

Actor Jeremy Pope makes his Geffen debut in *Choir Boy* following his critically acclaimed off-Broadway performance as Pharus Jonathan Young. *The New York Times* said, "Pope gives a magnetic, moving performance... he sings forth his dialogue with the rhythmic bite." Trip Cullman once again directs.

Scott Carter, executive producer and writer for Bill Maher's "Politically Incorrect" and "Real Time," wrote *The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord* (October 7 - November 16, 2014). Produced at the NoHo Arts Center last January to rave reviews, this whip-smart philosophical comedy is based on the historical fact that Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens, and Leo Tolstoy all wrote, or re-wrote their own versions of the Bible. "Funny and thought-provoking. Carter knows a thing or two about lively, accessible formats for the engagement of ideas," said Philip Brandes in the *Los Angeles Times*. "Imagine the dramaturgical love-child of Steve Allen's *Meeting of Minds* and Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit*."

Jerome Kern famously said, "Irving Berlin has no *place* in American music—he *is* American music." From "God Bless America" and "White Christmas" to "There's No Business Like Show Business" and "Blue Skies," Berlin created the American sound. Los Angeles favorite Hershey Felder returns to the Geffen in *Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin* (November 11 – December 21, 2014), a music-filled tribute to Irving Berlin's two great loves – his wife Ellin and his adopted homeland.

Among the most popular and creative members of the Los Angeles theater community, Felder's memorable resume includes *George Gershwin Alone; Monsieur Chopin; Beethoven, As I Knew Him; Abe Lincoln's Piano*, and *Franz Liszt in Rock Star*.

Up next is Conor McPherson's *The Night Alive* (February 3, 2015 - March 15, 2015). McPherson burst on to the international theatre scene with *The Weir*, winning the 1997 London Critics Circle Theatre Award for Most Promising Playwright, and then winning the Olivier Award for Best Play in 1999.

He has been nominated twice for the Tony Award® for Best Play – *The Shining City* in 2006 and *The Seafarer* in 2008. Says Ben Brantley of *The Night Alive*, "Transcendent... something bright and beautiful pulses in the shadows of this extraordinary new play. McPherson has a singular gift for making the ordinary glow with an extra dimension, like a gentle phosphorescence waiting to be coaxed into radiance."

At the Audrey from March 3 to April 12 is *Switzerland*, a Co-World Premiere with the Sydney Theatre Company, written by Joanna Murray-Smith. *Switzerland* is a Geffen Playhouse commission funded by the Edgerton Foundation. This new suspenseful drama features a fictional account of legendary author Patricia Highsmith (*Strangers on a Train, The Talented Mr. Ripley*) and her confrontation with a character, who is all-knowing as he is mysterious. Murray-Smith's *Female of the Species*, starring Annette Bening, played to sold-out houses at the Geffen in 2010. The Co-World Premiere of *Switzerland* will begin with a production at the Sydney Theatre Company (STC), Co-Artistic Directors Andrew Upton and Cate Blanchett, in late 2014 before opening at the Geffen Playhouse.

Director Peter DuBois, artistic director of the Huntington Theatre Company, who directed *Rapture Blister Burn* last year at the Geffen, will helm the West Coast Premiere of Stephen Belber's *The Power of Duff* (April 7, 2015 - May 17, 2015). DuBois said, "Uniquely comic and unabashedly theatrical, *The Power of Duff* also pulses with incredible emotional clarity. It tells the transformative story of one man waking up to life, just as it seemed he was too lost and it was too late." *The Boston Globe* said *Duff* is "a smart take on a thorny subject, leavened with an intriguing blend of skepticism and sincerity." Belber said of his work, "I've simply tried to ask questions that most humans ask at one point or another: how can I feel more connected, what's the best way to be human, faith in what?"

Steven Belber was an associate writer on Tectonic Theatre Project's *The Laramie Project* (Drama Desk and Lucille Lortel Award nominations) and a co-writer on *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*. His plays have been performed in 25 countries, including his Broadway debut *Match* in 2004, starring Frank Langella and Ray Liotta.

Hailed as one of the funniest plays of the year, Joshua Harmon's *Bad Jews* (June 9 – July 19, 2015) had its Off-Broadway Premiere last fall. *The New York Times* said that *Bad Jews* is "the best comedy of the season to date ... a zesty play with delectably savage humor." *Variety* said, "A biting comedy... all this nastiness is enjoyable on its own terms." *Entertainment Weekly* said, "A wonderful play." The uproarious comedy will be helmed by Matt Shakman, a widely lauded director who Geffen fans will know from his work on the World Premiere of *Wait Until Dark* in 2013 and the West Coast Premiere of David Lindsay-Abaire's *Good People* (eight Ovation nominations, including Best Director) in 2012.

THE 2014-2015 GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE SEASON AT THE GIL CATES THEATER

WEST COAST PREMIERE

CHOIR BOY

Written by Tarell Alvin McCraney

Directed by Trip Cullman

September 16 - October 26, 2014

At the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys, a young black man knows what is expected of him. Work hard, fall in line and if you've got the voice for it, use it to praise God in the school choir. Within these walls, Pharus Young, with the voice of an angel and a keen mind, should be a star. But in the face of Drew's time-honored traditions, can music overcome silence? Playwright Tarell Alvin McCraney navigates expectation, alienation and the overwhelming desire to be heard.

WORLD PREMIERE

HERSHEY FELDER AS IRVING BERLIN

Written by Hershey Felder

Directed by Trevor Hay

November 11 - December 21, 2014

"Irving Berlin has no place in American music, he is American music." - Jerome Kern

Hershey Felder brings to life the remarkable story of Irving Berlin, "America's Composer." From the depths of anti-Semitism in Czarist Russia, to New York's Lower East Side, and ultimately all of America and the world, Berlin's story epitomizes capturing the American dream. Featuring the composer's most popular and enduring songs from "God Bless America," to "White Christmas" and beyond, Hershey Felder's masterful creation of character and musical performance makes this evening with Irving Berlin an unforgettable journey.

WEST COAST PREMIERE

THE NIGHT ALIVE

Written by Conor McPherson

Directed by Randall Arney

February 3, 2015 - March 15, 2015

Tommy owes more than he earns. When he is unexpectedly compelled to help Aimee, a young woman with much harder luck than his own, the taste of turmoil he suffers becomes a full-blown meal. With his trademark humor and humanity, Conor McPherson (*The Seafarer*, *The Weir*) makes Phoenix Park, Dublin a place where anyone can rise from the ashes.

WEST COAST PREMIERE

THE POWER OF DUFF

Written by Stephen Belber

Directed by Peter DuBois

April 7, 2015 - May 17, 2015

Charlie Duff's nightly newscast makes him a voice to be heard, so why isn't his teen-age son listening? When an on-air prayer for his father goes viral, Duff finds himself at the center of a firestorm over God's place in the newsroom. When his prayers turn prophetic, Duff suddenly has the power to reach everyone- except his own son. Stephen Belber's sharp new play asks is there is anything more vital than the faith we have in one another?

WEST COAST PREMIERE

BAD JEWS

Written by Joshua Harmon

Directed by Matt Shakman

June 9, 2015 - July 19, 2015

Gil Cates Theater

In the Feygenbaum family, Daphna is the most devout. Just ask her. But her cousin Liam has the rights of the first born grandchild. Just ask him. When their grandfather dies leaving a treasured family heirloom, a battle ignites escalating to Old Testament proportions. Hailed as one of the funniest plays of the year, *Bad Jews* can't resist pointing out the worst in all of us.

THE 2014-2015 GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE SEASON AT THE AUDREY SKIRBALL KENIS THEATER

***THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS JEFFERSON, CHARLES DICKENS AND COUNT LEO TOLSTOY:
DISCORD***

Written by Scott Carter

October 7, 2014 - November 16, 2014

A founding father, a Victorian novelist and a Russian revolutionary walk into a...stop me if you've heard this one. Thomas Jefferson (yes that one), Charles Dickens (the very same) and Count Leo Tolstoy (who else?) are brought together in a blistering battle of wits for the ages. Scott Carter's whip-smart comedy examines what happens when great men of history are forced to repeat it.

A GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE COMMISSION FUNDED BY THE EDGERTON FOUNDATION

SWITZERLAND

Written by Joanna Murray-Smith

March 3, 2015 - April 12, 2015

Patricia Highsmith, master of the macabre, is racing to finish her novel when an attractive young man arrives representing her impatient publisher. Anxious to be rid of him and return to self-imposed exile, she attempts to terrorize him into fleeing. But he has a dark agenda of his own and will not leave until the final chapter is written.

In this new Geffen Playhouse commission, Joanna Murray-Smith (*The Female of the Species*), with her unique brand of humor and mystery, brings to life this literary giant best known for *Strangers on a Train* and *The Talented Mr. Ripley*.

AND AN ADDITIONAL PLAY TO BE ANNOUNCED

EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

The Geffen Playhouse

10886 Le Conte Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024

310.208.5454

www.geffenplayhouse.com

ABOUT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

The 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 Geffen Playhouse continues to present a body of work that has garnered national recognition. 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 Artistic Director Randall Arney, Managing Director Ken Novice, General Manager Behnaz Ataee, Chief Development Officer Regina Miller and Co-Chairs of the Board Martha Henderson and Pamela Robinson Hollander. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen Playhouse welcomes an audience of more than 130,000 each year, and maintains an extensive education and outreach program, designed to engage young people and the community at large in the arts. For more information, please visit www.geffenplayhouse.com.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Tim Choy, Davidson & Choy Publicity t.choy@dcpublicity.com 323-954-7510 ex 13

David Barber, Davidson & Choy Publicity d.barber@dcpublicity.com 323-954-7510 ex 20

Peter Goldman, Davidson & Choy Publicity p.goldman@dcpublicity.com 323-954-7510 ex 12

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