

**PLAY DEAD, CREATED BY MAGICIANS TODD ROBBINS  
& TELLER OPENS TONIGHT AT THE GEFFEN  
PLAYHOUSE**

**LOS ANGELES** (November 20, 2013) – “We’re never so alive as when we’re scared to death” posits Todd Robbins in the opening moments of *Play Dead*, opening tonight in the Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater at the **Geffen Playhouse**. This evening of spine chilling entertainment, a co-creation from the minds of magicians Teller, who directs and Robbins, the main performer, conjures spirits of serial killers and mediums in a show that is macabre and merry.

The themes of death, darkness and deception are explored in tales that are frightening, funny, erotic and jaw-dropping. With creepy delight, Robbins uses sight, sound and touch to raise a host of real life horrors including Albert Fish, a cannibalistic serial killer and Margery the Boston Medium whose nude séances raised the dead and evolved into orgies. Robbins performs a demon extracting surgery on a trusting audience member, an on-stage murder and the tidy ingesting of a light bulb.

The stories and events of this interactive production contain some disturbing images, brief moments of nudity and a great deal of fun. Audiences are surrounded by sights, sounds and touches of the returning dead. Material may be inappropriate for the faint of heart – or those under 18.

Teller, the smaller, quieter half of renowned magic duo Penn & Teller, worked with Robbins to develop *Play Dead* which was sparked from a desire to create a séance-based play. The show is an ode to the American spook show, a mid 20<sup>th</sup> century popular entertainment involving midnight shows, magicians and manipulation of the senses all taking place in the dark.

Long Beach, CA native Robbins, a magician and illusionist, developed an early fascination with all things spooky and sordid. As a teenager he snuck friends into the

Long Beach Municipal Cemetery where he captivated them with macabre stories. Trained at San Francisco's American Conservatory Theater, his interest in magic and carnivals brought him to Coney Island where he held positions from sideshow performer to executive director. Todd appears on the DVD instructional series *Modern Con Man* including *How to Scam Your Way to a Free Beer*, *Poker Night Scams and Cons* and *Work Place Pranks*, and is the author of *The Modern Con Man: How to Get Something for Nothing*.

*Play Dead* was presented Off-Broadway in November 2010 where *The Wall Street Journal* called it a "funny, furious and wholly enthralling" and *The New York Times* proclaimed it as a "wild, wicked show."

The Geffen Playhouse presents  
***Play Dead***  
Written by Todd Robbins & Teller  
Directed by Teller

**Performance Schedule**

<i>Preview Performances</i>	Tuesday, November 5 – Tuesday, November 19, 2013
<b><i>Opening Night</i></b>	Wednesday, November 20, 2013
<b><i>Closing Night</i></b>	Sunday, December 22, 2013
Monday	<i>Only Monday, November 25 at 8pm (Thanksgiving week)</i>
Tuesday – Friday	8:00pm*
Saturday	3:00pm; 8:00pm
Sunday	2:00pm; 7:00pm

\*No performance on Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 28

**Ticket Info**

Ticket prices range from \$57 to \$87 and are available in-person at the Geffen Playhouse box office, online at [www.geffenplayhouse.com](http://www.geffenplayhouse.com) or by phone at 310-208-5454.

**Location**

The **Geffen Playhouse** in the Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater  
10886 Le Conte Avenue, Los Angeles CA 90024

**Photos**

High resolution photos are available from the Geffen Playhouse online media center at <http://geffenplayhouse.com/mediacenter.php>.

## **Biographies**

### **Todd Robbins**

(As Himself / Co-Writer)

Todd Robbins is an award winning performer and creative artist who has worked in many areas of popular entertainment and the performing arts during a thirty year career. If Todd looks familiar to you, it's probably because you have seen him on one of the more than 200 TV shows he has done. These include all the major network morning shows, the late night talkfests of Letterman, Leno and Conan O'Brien and the NBC special *Extreme Variety*. Classically trained as an actor, he has put his performing abilities to good use in the two Drama Desk nominated theater pieces that he created for off-Broadway. The first one, *Carnival Knowledge*, was a behind the scenes look at the world of the American sideshow and chronicled his experiences working in places like Coney Island. The second show is *Play Dead*. Currently, Todd is working with Discovery Studios on developing a TV series based upon dark chapters of history. And he is also reviving the 1923 musical *Poppy*. This was the show that made W.C. Fields a star.

### **Julie Marie Hassett**

(Ensemble)

Julie Marie Hassett's love of and work on the stage has thrived from Chicago to Los Angeles. She directed and performed in *The Vagina Monologues* at the Hermosa Beach Playhouse for the V-Day Campaign to end violence against women. Leading feature film roles include a police detective (*Measure*), a dominatrix (*Salesgirl*) and a werewolf (*Blood Redd*). She wrote and performed in the film, *Joy*. She looks forward to playing Frieda in next year's *The Joy Division*, a WWII feature developed from a Cannes recognized short film telling the story of a Polish resistance fighter who triumphs over oppression after being forced into concentration camp prostitution. Julie is a partner in Red Love Film and founding member of Foundation of Joy, a nonprofit which raises funds and awareness for the welfare, education, and artistic development of women, children and young adults through art. She is grateful to the Geffen Playhouse and Teller for this opportunity.

### **Brianna Hurley**

(Ensemble)

Brianna Hurley is thrilled to be making her West Coast debut! Hailing from New York City, Ms. Hurley has well over twenty-five Off and Off-Off Broadway credits, most recently including The Theater Project's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the East Coast run of *Play Dead*. She also holds international credits with Teatro Jaco and the Walt Disney Company. She is both a graduate of The American Musical and Dramatics Academy and a proud member of SAG-AFTRA. She would like to thank her family, Matt and all of her friends for their love and support. [www.briannahurley.com](http://www.briannahurley.com)

### **Shar Mayer**

(Ensemble)

Shar Mayer is a New Yorker who now lives in Southern California. Shar began doing magic shows as a child. She played "Magicgal" in a touring vaudeville show where she found her love of performing. Shar enjoys working in theater on both sides of the curtain. Her obsession with horror makeup and scare-acting took her on a 30 year journey working in the haunt industry. Shar has performed monster roles in live haunted events and TV/movie projects, including *Zombies VS Vampires*. She's been featured in national haunt commercials, billboards, bus and print ads. Shar has worked on many interesting projects like *Star Trek: The Tour* and *Glory of Christmas*. She also designs makeup for DWI programs and is the production manager for

ScareLA. Shar thanks Jerry and Rosie for their love and support. Thank you to Teller for this wonderful opportunity. Also thanks to Harry Houdini for showing us the way.

### **Rick Williamson**

(Ensemble)

Rick Williamson is an actor, writer, director, stunt man and puppeteer. He is very honored to work with Teller and the Geffen Playhouse. His other stage performances include award-winning productions of *Loot* at The Odyssey Theatre, *Bleacher Bums* at The Century City Playhouse, *Flight of the Penguin* at The Limelight Playhouse and his own *The Puppet Show* at The Company of Angels. TV credits include *Reno 911*, *The Conan O'Brien Show*, *Firefly* and a recurring role on *General Hospital*. Film credits include *Born to be a Star*, *Houndz from Hell* and *Death Factory* where he played the infamous Albert Fish. He is currently in pre-production to direct and star in his very own *Combat Nuns*. Previously he directed and wrote the award-winning *A Short Film* which has won over audiences worldwide. Rick went into the arts because it was easier than pulling a nun through the eye of a needle.

### **Teller**

(Director / Co-Writer)

Teller has been the smaller, quieter half of Penn & Teller since 1975. With Penn Jillette, he has played off and on Broadway, toured in North America and Britain, and is currently the longest-running headline act in Las Vegas. Penn & Teller have written and starred in television series and specials, including eight seasons of the Emmy-nominated Showtime series *Penn & Teller: Bullshit!*; *Penn & Teller Tell a Lie* on Discovery; *Penn & Teller's Sin City Spectacular* on FX; *Behind the Scenes*, a PBS children's series on the arts; *The Unpleasant World of Penn & Teller*, a magic and comedy series on England's Channel 4; and the recent ITV variety series, *Penn & Teller: Fool Us*. Teller has written for *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Smithsonian*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Esquire*, *GQ*, *The New Yorker*, as well as three books with Penn Jillette and two on his own. He's also a frequent contributor to *All Things Considered* on NPR. In 2008, Teller co-directed a version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, conceived as a supernatural horror thriller that employed stage magic to represent the play's uncanny hallucinations and manifestations. He directed the original Off-Broadway production of *Play Dead* and co-directed the performance film. In 2014, Teller's dark, magical vision of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (with music by Tom Waits) will run at the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge; and the feature documentary Teller directed, *Tim's Vermeer*, will be released in theaters internationally by Sony Picture Classics.

### **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 Chairman of the Board Frank Mancuso. 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](http://www.geffenplayhouse.com).