

# GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

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**“AVA: THE SECRET CONVERSATIONS” JOINS THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE  
2022/2023 SEASON LINEUP FOR ITS U.S. PREMIERE**

**WRITTEN BY AND STARRING ELIZABETH MCGOVERN**

**DIRECTED BY MORITZ VON STUELPNAGEL**

**PREVIEWS BEGIN APRIL 4 – OPENING NIGHT IS APRIL 13**

LOS ANGELES (August 9, 2022) – *Ava: The Secret Conversations* will join the Geffen Playhouse 2022/2023 season lineup to complete the full season, it was announced today. Written by and starring Academy Award, Golden Globe and Emmy Award–nominated Elizabeth McGovern (*Once Upon a Time in America*, *Downton Abbey*), *Ava: The Secret Conversations* will make its U.S. premiere in Geffen Playhouse’s Gil Cates Theater. The play had its world premiere in London in January 2022. The Geffen Playhouse production will be directed by Tony Award–nominated Moritz von Stuelpnagel (*Bernhardt/Hamlet*, *Present Laughter*).

*Ava: The Secret Conversations* will begin previews on Tuesday, April 4, 2023, and opening night is Thursday, April 13, 2023.

“I either write the book or sell the jewels. I’m kinda sentimental about the jewels.” So says legendary Hollywood icon Ava Gardner (Elizabeth McGovern) to her ghost writer Peter Evans as they begin work on her tell-all biography that will shock Tinseltown. But as Peter attempts to glean the juicy details about her life story, her marriages to Mickey Rooney, Artie Shaw, and Frank Sinatra, and her turbulent relationship to Howard Hughes, an altogether different and unexpected journey unfolds in this theatrical glimpse into the private life of Hollywood’s original femme fatale.

The 2022/2023 Gil Cates Theater season will launch with the Tony Award–winning Stephen Daldry production of playwright Matthew López’s *The Inheritance*, making its West Coast premiere and directed by Mike Donahue. *The Inheritance* first premiered in London at the Young Vic in 2018 before moving to New York and making its Broadway premiere in November 2019.

The season will continue in the Gil Cates Theater with the West Coast premiere of playwright Lee Edward Colston II’s epic drama *The First Deep Breath*, directed by Steve H. Broadnax III, which chronicles the depths families will go to hide their skeletons from the outside world and one another. Next up will be the U.S. premiere of *Ava: The Secret Conversations*, written by and starring Elizabeth McGovern and directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel.

Closing the Gil Cates Theater lineup will be playwright Katori Hall’s *The Mountaintop*, a deeply moving story that takes place the night before Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination, after delivering his history-

altering “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech. *The Mountaintop* will be directed by Patricia McGregor, who returns to Geffen Playhouse after directing the critically acclaimed and sold-out run of *Lights Out: Nat “King” Cole* on the Gil Cates Theater stage in 2019, which was also co-written by McGregor and Colman Domingo.

The 2022/2023 Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater season will be a full lineup of world premieres and commence with the Drama Desk Award–nominated mentalist Vinny DePonto and co-writer Josh Koenigberg’s *Mindplay*. Keeping in the spirit of the Geffen’s long tradition of magic, *Mindplay* is an entirely new theatrical event in which your thoughts play a leading role. Next up will be a new original musical from Zoe Sarnak and Rachel Bonds, *The Lonely Few*, featuring Tony Award winner Lauren Patten (*Jagged Little Pill*). *The Lonely Few* is a love story between two women searching for a sense of home. Rounding out the Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater lineup will be actor and playwright Ramiz Monsef’s *The Ants*, a horror play infused with darkly humorous social commentary. Monsef previously appeared at the Geffen in *Guards at the Taj* (2015) and *Mysterious Circumstances* (2019).

### **GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE 2022/2023 SEASON**

GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE PRESENTS THE STEPHEN DALDRY PRODUCTION OF  
**THE INHERITANCE (Part 1 & Part 2) (Gil Cates Theater)**  
WEST COAST PREMIERE  
Sep 13 – Nov 27, 2022

Written by **Matthew López**

Inspired by the Novel *Howards End* by **E.M. Forster**

Directed by **Mike Donahue**

Featuring **Nic Ashe, Bill Brochtup, Tantoo Cardinal, Juan Castano, Jay Donnell, Eric Flores, Israel Erron Ford, August Gray Gall, Adam Kantor, Eddie Lopez, Kasey Mahaffy, Miguel Pinzon, Avi Roque and Tuc Watkins**

In contemporary Manhattan, Eric and Toby are 30-somethings who seem to be very much in love and thriving. But on the cusp of their engagement, they meet an older man haunted by the past, and a younger man hungry for a future. Chance meetings lead to surprising choices as the lives of three generations interlink and collide—with explosive results.

*The Inheritance* reunites Geffen Playhouse alums Matthew López & Mike Donahue (*The Legend of Georgia McBride*, 2017) for an extended run of the celebrated Stephen Daldry production after its Olivier Award–sweeping London and Tony Award–winning Broadway runs.

*Audience Engagement initiatives for The Inheritance are supported by the Sheri and Les Biller Family Foundation.*

**MINDPLAY (Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater)**

WORLD PREMIERE

Nov 8 – Dec 18, 2022

Created & Performed by **Vinny DePonto**

Written by **Vinny DePonto & Josh Koenigsberg**

Directed by **Andrew Neisler**

Produced with **Eva Price**

*Mindplay* is a love letter to the imperfect mind. Drama Desk Award–nominated theater-maker and mentalist Vinny DePonto leads us on a raucous romp through the back channels of our innermost thoughts, exploring the fragmented and flawed nature of our memories, and asks us to question whether we can trust the voice inside our heads. In the spirit of the Geffen’s long tradition of magic comes an entirely new theatrical event in which your thoughts play a leading role.

*Major support for this world premiere production provided by the Edgerton Foundation New Play Production Fund.*

**THE FIRST DEEP BREATH (Gil Cates Theater)**

WEST COAST PREMIERE

Jan 31 – Mar 5, 2023

Written by **Lee Edward Colston II**

Directed by **Steve H. Broadnax III**

Pastor Albert Jones and his family are proud leaders of the Mother Bethel Baptist Church and pillars of their community. Plans are being made for a special memorial service to honor their late daughter Diane on the sixth anniversary of her passing. But when Abdul-Malik, the eldest son whom Albert blames for her death, returns home from prison, the family’s veneer begins to crack as shocking revelations come to light. A ferocious new epic written by Lee Edward Colston II, *The First Deep Breath* chronicles the depths families will go to hide their skeletons from the outside world and each other.

**THE LONELY FEW (Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater)**

WORLD PREMIERE MUSICAL & GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE COMMISSION

Feb 28 – Apr 9, 2023

Book by **Rachel Bonds**

Music & Lyrics by **Zoe Sarnak**

Produced in Association with **FourthWall Theatrical**

Featuring **Lauren Patten**

*Additional casting to be announced.*

Lila (Lauren Patten, Tony Award winner for *Jagged Little Pill*) is getting by in her Kentucky hometown—scanning groceries at the Save-A-Lot, caring for her erratic brother, and living for Friday nights, when she plays a gig with her band The Lonely Few. And that’s enough. Or she thought it was, until Amy, an established musician ragged from the road, passes through and offers her a shot at something much, much bigger. But is Lila ready for the life she never dared to imagine? A world premiere musical by Zoe Sarnak and Rachel Bonds, *The Lonely Few* is a love story between two women searching for a sense of home.

*This play was commissioned as part of the Geffen Playhouse’s New Play Development Program thanks to the generosity of Sandra Krause and William Fitzgerald. Major support for this world premiere production provided by the Edgerton Foundation New Play Production Fund.*

**AVA: THE SECRET CONVERSATIONS (Gil Cates Theater)**

U.S. PREMIERE

Apr 4 – May 7, 2023

Written by **Elizabeth McGovern**

Directed by **Moritz von Stuelpnagel**

Based on the Book *The Secret Conversations* by **Peter Evans & Ava Gardner**

Produced in Association with **Karl Sydow**

Produced with the Support of the Ava Gardner Trust

Starring **Elizabeth McGovern**

*Additional casting to be announced.*

"I either write the book or sell the jewels. I'm kinda sentimental about the jewels." So says legendary Hollywood icon Ava Gardner (Elizabeth McGovern, *Once Upon a Time in America*, *Downton Abbey*) to her ghost writer Peter Evans as they begin work on her tell-all biography that will shock Tinseltown. But as Peter attempts to glean the juicy details about her life story, her marriages to Mickey Rooney, Artie Shaw, and Frank Sinatra, and her turbulent relationship to Howard Hughes, an altogether different and unexpected journey unfolds in this theatrical glimpse into the private life of Hollywood's original femme fatale.

City National Bank is the Presenting Sponsor of *Ava: The Secret Conversations*.

### **THE MOUNTAINTOP (Gil Cates Theater)**

Jun 6 – Jul 9, 2023

Written by **Katori Hall**

Directed by **Patricia McGregor**

It's April 3, 1968 and Martin Luther King, Jr. returns to the Lorraine Motel after delivering his history-altering "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech. When he orders room service, a young maid arrives with a revelation that calls Dr. King to confront unwelcome truths. As a lightning storm rages outside, the legacy of America's most revered civil rights leader is laid bare to reveal his profound humanity. A single night's reckoning with racism, righteousness, and the rocky path toward justice, *The Mountaintop* imagines what Dr. King's last night on Earth could have been.

### **THE ANTS (Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater)**

WORLD PREMIERE

June 20 – July 30, 2023

Written by **Ramiz Monsef**

Directed by **Pirronne Yousefzadeh**

A breathtaking house on a hill—complete with the most state-of-the-art security that excessive wealth can buy—should feel like a refuge for Nami, whose recent firing and eviction have forced him to crash at his brother and sister-in-law's luxury home. But on this dark and fateful night, a violent uprising outside leaves the three trapped in what they think is an impenetrable fortress. A horror play infused with darkly humorous social commentary, *The Ants* asks why we spend so much money protecting ourselves instead of investing in our shared humanity.

This play was created during the Geffen Playhouse's The Writers' Room program, in which Los Angeles playwrights develop new works with the support and guidance of the Geffen Playhouse artistic team. Major support for this world premiere production provided by the Edgerton Foundation New Play

Production Fund.

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**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. 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 Gil Cates, Jr., Artistic Director Matt Shakman and Board Chair Adi Greenberg. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen welcomes an audience of more than 130,000 each year, and maintains extensive education and community engagement programs, designed to involve underserved young people and the community at large in the arts.

[www.geffenplayhouse.org](http://www.geffenplayhouse.org)

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