

GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

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CAST ANNOUNCED FOR GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE U.S. PREMIERE OF “AVA: THE SECRET CONVERSATIONS”

FEATURING AARON COSTA GANIS, RYAN W. GARCIA AND ELIZABETH MCGOVERN

WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH MCGOVERN AND DIRECTED BY MORITZ VON STUELPNAGEL

PREVIEWS BEGIN APRIL 4 - OPENING NIGHT IS APRIL 13

LOS ANGELES (March 8, 2023) – Geffen Playhouse today announced the full cast for the U.S. premiere of [Ava: The Secret Conversations](#), written by and featuring Academy Award, Golden Globe and Emmy Award-nominated **Elizabeth McGovern** (*Once Upon a Time in America*, *Downton Abbey*) as Ava Gardner, and directed by Tony Award-nominated **Moritz von Stuelpnagel** (*Bernhardt/Hamlet*, *Present Laughter*).

The cast includes **Aaron Costa Ganis** as Peter Evans (*The Noel Diary*, *Jessica Jones*), **Ryan W. Garcia** as Ed Victor (*Ravenswood Manor*, *Community*) and **Elizabeth McGovern** as Ava Gardner.

Previews for *Ava: The Secret Conversations* begin Tuesday, April 4, 2023 in the Gil Cates Theater at Geffen Playhouse. 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 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.

AVA: THE SECRET CONVERSATIONS

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

Previews: April 4, 2023 – April 12, 2023

Opening Night: April 13, 2023

Closing Night: May 7, 2023

CAST

Aaron Costa Ganis as Peter Evans
Ryan W. Garcia as Ed Victor
Elizabeth McGovern as Ava Gardner

PRODUCTION TEAM

Scenic Designer **David Meyer**
Costume Designer **Toni-Leslie James**
Lighting Designer **Amith Chandrashaker**
Sound Designer **Cricket S. Myers**
Projection Designer **Alex Basco Koch**
Associate Director **Rhonda Kohl**
Dramaturg **Olivia O'Connor**
Production Stage Manager **Julie Ann Renfro**
Assistant Stage Manager **Gabrielle J. Bruno**
Casting Director **Phyllis Schuringa, CSA**

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Monday	No performance
Tuesday – Friday	7:00 p.m.
Saturday	2:00 and 7:00 p.m.
Sunday	1:00 and 6:00 p.m.

LOCATION

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

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets currently priced at \$30.00 - \$129.00. Available by phone at 310.208.2028 or online at www.geffenplayhouse.org. Fees may apply.

Currently, children under six years of age will not be admitted. Masks are no longer required—but are encouraged—for audiences in our theaters and lobby/courtyard areas for all future productions.

Rush tickets for each day's performance are made available to the general public one hour before showtime at the box office. \$35.00 General/\$15.00 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

Elizabeth McGovern (Playwright) (Ava Gardner)

Elizabeth McGovern's career spans theatre, film, television, and music. She recently starred as Lady Cora in the feature film adaptation of *Downton Abbey*, a role for which she was nominated for a Golden Globe and a Primetime Emmy, and won a SAG Award. Elizabeth recently played Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* at Theatre Royal Bath, and produced her first feature, *The Chaperone*, in which she starred. Previous film credits include *Ragtime*, for which she received Academy Award and Golden Globe nominations; Sergio Leone's classic *Once Upon a Time in America* with Robert De Niro; Curtis Hanson's *The Bedroom Window*; and John Hughes' *She's Having a Baby*. Elizabeth has performed in the theatre in America and the UK, winning the 2013 Will Award for her work in Shakespeare. Other theatre credits include *The Misanthrope* at the Young Vic, *Three Days of Rain* at Donmar Warehouse, *Time and the Conways* at Roundabout Theatre Company, and the West End premiere of Kenneth Lonergan's *Starry Messenger* with Matthew Broderick. With her band Sadie and the Hotheads, she has released five albums (including one as a solo release), and is at work on a sixth. Elizabeth would like to thank Karl Sydow.

Moritz von Stuelpnagel (Director)

Broadway: Theresa Rebeck's *Bernhardt/Hamlet* starring Janet McTeer (two Tony nominations); Noël Coward's *Present Laughter* starring Kevin Kline (three Tony nominations including Best Revival of a Play); Robert Askins' *Hand to God* (five Tony nominations including Best New Play and Best Director). London's West End: Theresa Rebeck's *Mad House* starring David Harbour and Bill Pullman; *Hand to God* (Olivier nomination). Off-Broadway: Theresa Rebeck's *Seared* (MCC Theater); Larissa FastHorse's *The Thanksgiving Play* (Playwrights Horizons); Mike Lew's *Teenage Dick* (Ma-Yi Theater Company/The Public Theater); Nick Jones' *Important Hats of the Twentieth Century* (Manhattan Theatre Club); Nick Jones' *Verité* (Lincoln Center Theatre/LCT3); Mike Lew's *Bike America* (Ma-Yi Theater Company); Nick Jones' *Trevor* (Lesser America); Robert Askins' *Love Song of the Albanian Sous Chef* (Ensemble Studio Theatre); *Mel & El: Show and Tell* (Ars Nova); Michael Mitnick's *Spacebar: A Broadway Play by Kyle Sugarman* (Studio 42); and Adam Szymkowicz's *My Base and Scurvy Heart* (Studio 42). Regional: Alliance Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Huntington Theatre Company, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Pasadena Playhouse, and more. Upcoming: Michael Shayan's *avaaz* (South Coast Repertory). Moritz is the former artistic director of Studio 42, NYC's producer of "unproducible" plays. www.moritzvs.com

Aaron Costa Ganis (Peter Evans)

Aaron has worked theatrically on and off-Broadway at the Roundabout Theatre Company, LAByrnth Theater Company, Second Stage Theater, The Public Theater, and more. He can be seen on TV in the upcoming season of *Power Book III: Raising Kanan*, this season of *Fantasy Island*, *The Endgame*, *Bull*, *Almost Family*, *Blue Bloods*, *Jessica Jones*, *House of Cards*, and more. He can be seen in the recent films *Susie Searches*, *The Noel Diary*, *Lazy Eye*, *Monsters and Men*, and *Set It Up*. Aaron wishes to dedicate this show to June and Rick, his mom and dad. M.F.A.: NYU Graduate Acting Program, B.A.: Brandeis University and University of Oxford.

Ryan W. Garcia (Ed Victor)

Ryan has been acting professionally since he was a child in Miami, FL. He's been on stage in LA with 30 Minute Musicals, *Ravenswood Manor* at Celebration Theatre, *Lottie Platchett Took a Hatchet* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and the musical *FOUND* with IAMA Theatre Company. He was featured as Domingo on *Community*, Dude Calzone in Nickelodeon's *Side Hustle*, and most recently as René Morales on *The Lincoln Lawyer*. He voices Ricardo in the animated feature *Fireheart*, and is currently recurring as multiple roles in the new animated Nickelodeon series *Big Nate*.

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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. 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

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MEDIA CONTACTS

Zenon Dmytryk

Geffen Playhouse

zenond@geffenplayhouse.org

Isaak Berliner

Geffen Playhouse

isaakb@geffenplayhouse.org