

GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

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**CAST ANNOUNCED FOR GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE
LOS ANGELES PREMIERE OF
“POTUS: OR, BEHIND EVERY GREAT DUMBASS
ARE SEVEN WOMEN TRYING TO KEEP HIM ALIVE”**

**FEATURING ITO AGHAYERE, MARIA BELLO, ALEXANDRA BILLINGS, LAUREN BLUMENFELD,
SHANNON COCHRAN, JANE LEVY & ELIZABETH RODRIGUEZ**

WRITTEN BY SELINA FILLINGER AND DIRECTED BY JENNIFER CHAMBERS

PREVIEWS BEGIN JANUARY 17 - OPENING NIGHT IS JANUARY 25

LOS ANGELES (November 15, 2023) – Geffen Playhouse today announced the full cast for its Los Angeles premiere of the three-time Tony Award-nominated play *POTUS: Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass Are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive*, written by **Selina Fillinger** (Apple TV+'s *The Morning Show*, *Something Clean*) and directed by **Jennifer Chambers** (*The Cake*, *The Enigmatist*).

The cast includes **Ito Aghayere** (*Junk*, *Bernhardt/Hamlet*) as **Chris**; **Maria Bello** (*Beef*, *A History of Violence*) as **Bernadette**; **Alexandra Billings** (*Wicked*, *Transparent*) as **Margaret**; **Lauren Blumenfeld** (*The Assembled Parties*, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*) as **Stephanie**; **Shannon Cochran** (*A Doll's House, Part 2*; *Bug*) as **Harriet**; **Jane Levy** (*Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist*, *Suburgatory*) as **Dusty**; and **Elizabeth Rodriguez** (*Orange Is the New Black*, *The Motherf**ker with the Hat*) as **Jean**.

Previews for *POTUS* begin Wednesday, January 17, 2024, in the Gil Cates Theater at Geffen Playhouse. Opening night is Thursday, January 25, 2024.

A derogatory comment, a summit gone awry, an anal abscess—it's a bad day at the White House. When the President unwittingly spins a PR nightmare into a global crisis, it inevitably falls on the seven women he relies on most to clean up the mess. Take a raucous romp through the halls of the West Wing in a riotous and irreverent farce about the men who hold the power vs. the women who get the job done.

POTUS: OR, BEHIND EVERY GREAT DUMBASS ARE SEVEN WOMEN TRYING TO KEEP HIM ALIVE

Written by **Selina Fillinger**

Directed by **Jennifer Chambers**

Previews: January 17, 2024 – January 24, 2024

Opening Night: January 25, 2024

Closing Night: February 18, 2024

CAST

Ito Aghayere as Chris
Maria Bello as Bernadette
Alexandra Billings as Margaret
Lauren Blumenfeld as Stephanie
Shannon Cochran as Harriet
Jane Levy as Dusty
Elizabeth Rodriguez as Jean

PRODUCTION TEAM

Set Design by **Brett J. Banakis**
Costume Designer **Samantha C. Jones**
Lighting Designer **Elizabeth Harper**
Original Music & Sound Design by **Lindsay Jones**
Associate Director **Emily Moler**
Fight Director **Julie Ouellette**
Intimacy Director **Amanda Rose Villarreal**
Dramaturg **Olivia O'Connor**
Production Stage Manager **Darlene Miyakawa**
Assistant Stage Manager **Colleen Danaher**
Casting Director **Phyllis Schuringa, CSA**

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Monday, Tuesday	No performance
Wednesday – Friday	8:00 p.m.
Saturday	3:00 and 8:00 p.m.
Sunday	2:00 and 7:00 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.

All Geffen Playhouse productions are intended for an adult audience; children under ten 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. \$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

Selina Fillinger (Playwright)

Selina Fillinger is an LA-based writer and performer. Her plays include *The Collapse; Something Clean; Faceless*; and *The Armor Plays: Cinched/Strapped*. In 2022, *POTUS: Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass Are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive* debuted on Broadway, earning three Tony Award nominations. Her plays have been developed at Roundabout Theatre Company, Manhattan Theatre Club, McCarter Theatre Center, Williamstown Theatre Festival, The Old Globe, Alley Theatre, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, and Northlight Theatre. She's currently commissioned at South Coast Repertory and Roundabout. She was a Hawthornden Fellow and a resident of McCarter's Sallie B. Goodman Artists' Retreat; *Something Clean* is the recipient of the 2019 Laurents/Hatcher Award and *Cinched/Strapped* received the 2019 Williamstown Theatre Festival's L. Arnold Weissberger New Play Award. Selina wrote for the third season of Apple TV+'s *The Morning Show*; she's developing a feature with Chernin Entertainment/Netflix, and a pilot with Hunting Lane/Hulu.

Jennifer Chambers (Director)

Jennifer is a Los Angeles based director. She developed and directed the world premiere of *The Cake* by Bekah Brunstetter at Echo Theater Company with subsequent productions at Geffen Playhouse and Barrington Stage Company, *The Enigmatist* by David Kwong (Geffen Playhouse, The Kennedy Center), *If I Forget* by Steven Levenson (Barrington Stage Company), *A Kid Like Jake* by Daniel Pearl (IAMA Theatre Company), *The Feast* by Deborah Stein (CalArts), Sheila Callaghan's *Bed* (Echo Theater Company), Jessica Goldberg's *Better* (Echo Theater Company), the world premiere of Stephen Belber's *The Muscles in Our Toes* (El Portal Forum Theatre), *The Pain and the Itch* by Bruce Norris (Zephyr Theatre), *Playdates* by Sam Wolfson (Theatre Asylum, Elephant Theatre Company), and the world premiere of *Complete* by Andrea Kuchlewski. She has worked with acclaimed playwrights Paula Vogel and Bess Wohl and has directed workshops and readings for South Coast Repertory, The Old Globe, Geffen Playhouse, Center Theatre Group, and McCarter Theatre Center. She was associate artistic director at the Echo Theater Company and ran the playwrights lab for 3 years. She is a proud member of the new class of The Kilroys, an LA/NY based collective of playwrights, directors, and producers who fight to achieve equal representation on our American stages and gender balance in the American Theater. She is the co-founder of Girl Crush Films. www.jennifergchambers.com

Ito Aghayere (Chris)

Broadway: *Junk* (Ayad Akhtar); *Bernhardt/Hamlet* (Theresa Rebeck). Off-Broadway: *Mlima's Tale* (The Public Theater); *Familiar* (Playwrights Horizons); *The Liquid Plain* (Signature Theatre); *Three Days to See* (Transport Group/NYTW); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Classical Theatre of Harlem); *The Tempest*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Macbeth* (Classic Stage Company). Regional: *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Kansas City Repertory Theatre); *Vanya and Sonya and Masha and Spike* (Vermont Stage). Awards: Off-Broadway Lucille Lortel Award nomination for her role in *Familiar*. TV: *Star Trek: Picard*, *Carol's Second Act*, *The Blacklist*, *Instinct*, *Master of None*, *Elementary*, *9-1-1: Lone Star*. Film: *Fear the Night* (Neil LaBute), *Logan Lucky* (Steven Soderbergh). Ito graduated from Duke University with a B.A. in Political Science and Theater Arts and later interned at the White House under the Obama Administration while pursuing her graduate studies at Columbia University where she received her M.F.A. She is thrilled to be making her Geffen Playhouse debut. IG: @itoaghayere. AEA Member.

Maria Bello (Bernadette)

Maria Bello is an internationally renowned actress, writer, producer, and activist. Some of her most memorable and award-winning films in her 30-year career include *Coyote Ugly*, *A History of Violence*, *Grown Ups*, and *The Cooler*. Her television credits include *ER*, *NCIS*, and *Beef*, for which she is nominated

for an Emmy Award. She is the author of *Whatever... Love is Love* and wrote the story for and produced the acclaimed film *The Woman King*. She's been nominated for two Golden Globes and won the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role in *A History of Violence*. She is thrilled to be making her theatre debut in Los Angeles at the Geffen.

Alexandra Billings (Margaret)

Alexandra Billings is an actress, singer, author, teacher, and activist. Alex starred as "Madame Morrible" in the Broadway production of *Wicked*, the first trans actor to portray the role. She previously starred on Broadway in Manhattan Theatre Club's *The Nap*. Alex starred in the Amazon television series *The Peripheral*, and the award-winning *Transparent*. She has been a recurring guest star on *The Conners* and *Never Have I Ever*, among others. She stars in and is the Executive Producer of the upcoming feature film release *Queen Tut* and will Executive Produce and star in the A&E limited series *Liz*, the story of Elizabeth Carmichael, creator of the ill-fated 3-wheeled car the Dale. Her autobiographical memoir *This Time for Me* is published by Amazon Books. Alex is a Professor of Theater at USC. She is a Viewpoints Associate at the Steppenwolf Theater Company.

Lauren Blumenfeld (Stephanie)

Lauren Blumenfeld is thrilled to be making her Geffen Playhouse debut! Favorite theatre credits include: *The Assembled Parties* (Broadway); *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as Southwest Africa, From the German Südwestafrika, Between the Years 1884-1915* (Soho Rep); *Sailor Man* (NYC Fringe Festival Award); and numerous productions at Ars Nova. Lauren has performed abroad at The Old Vic (London) and regionally at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, The Old Globe (San Diego), Pittsburgh Public Theater, and Virginia Stage Company. She was a series regular on the satirical comedy *Nightcap*, and has played recurring roles on *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, *Kevin (Probably) Saves the World*, *Limitless*, *Unforgettable*, *Doubt*, *Deadbeat*, and *Archibald's Next Big Thing* (Netflix). Lauren is also a writer and filmmaker. Her shorts have played in festivals all over the world, including SXSW and SIFF. She is an NYU (Experimental Theatre Wing) graduate and a proud volunteer at The 52nd Street Project and School on Wheels. Love and thanks to her family!

Shannon Cochran (Harriet)

Shannon Cochran most recently appeared in the "Voices of America" productions of *The Little Foxes* and *Appropriate* at South Coast Repertory, as well as the West Coast premiere of Broadway's *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* in San Francisco. Recent favorite credits include the role of "Nora" in the world premiere of *A Doll's House, Part 2* at South Coast Repertory; *Buried Child* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* at Writers Theatre; and the Roundabout Theatre Company's National Tour of *Cabaret*. She is an Obie and Theatre World Award winner for the role she created and performed in *Bug* (Gate Theatre/London, Barrow Street Theatre) and was in the first National Tour of *August: Osage County*. Other theatres include Steppenwolf Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre Company, Goodman Theatre, The Old Globe, Long Wharf Theatre, Mark Taper Forum, Barbican (London), Geffen Playhouse, Court Theatre, Victory Gardens Theater, Marriott Theatre, and Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. Film: *Captive State*, *The Ring*, *Star Trek: Nemesis*, *The Perfect Family*, among others. Television: *Modern Family*, *Scandal*, *NCIS: Los Angeles*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *The Office*, among others.

Jane Levy (Dusty)

Jane Levy can next be seen starring in *A Little Prayer*, which premiered at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival and was acquired by Sony Pictures Classics. Levy previously starred as the titular character in NBC's musical dramedy *Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist* for which she earned a Golden Globe nomination in 2021 for Best Actress in a Television Series – Comedy for her portrayal. Levy became well known for her role as Tessa Altman on ABC's hit series *Suburgatory*, as well as Sam Raimi's record-breaking remake of

Evil Dead and the thriller *Don't Breathe* for Screen Gems. Other notable credits include *Shameless*, *Fun Size*, *Castle Rock*, and *What/If*.

Elizabeth Rodriguez (Jean)

Elizabeth Rodriguez is an award-winning actress and member of the LABYrinth Theater Company. She originated the roles of “Miss Rivera” in the world premiere of *Halfway B*tches Go Straight to Heaven* (Drama Desk nomination, Obie winner) at Atlantic Theater Company, “Veronica” in the world premiere of *The Motherf**ker with the Hat* on Broadway (Tony nomination, Outer Critics Circle winner, Theatre World winner), and “Santa Monica” in the world premiere of *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* at The Public Theater, all written by Pulitzer Prize–winning playwright Stephen Adly Guirgis. Other notable world premieres include *Unconditional* and *A View from 151st Street* at The Public Theater. Television roles include the CBS drama *East New York*, as “Aleida Diaz” in *Orange Is the New Black* (three consecutive SAG Awards), *Fear the Walking Dead*, *Prime Suspect*, *Shameless*, *Power*, *Ghost*, and *Chance*. Films include *Logan*, *The Drop*, *Miami Vice*, and *11:55 Holyoke*. She most recently starred in, co-wrote, and produced the independent film *Allswell in New York*, winning the 2022 Best Screenplay Award at the Tribeca Film Festival.

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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 Tarell Alvin McCraney 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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