

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES TONY AWARD WINNER BRIAN STOKES MITCHELL AS PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN THE WORLD PREMIERE OF *3 SUMMERS OF LINCOLN*

The Original Musical Will Also Feature Broadway Veterans
Eric Anderson as George B. McClellan
Carmen Cusack as Mary Todd Lincoln
Quentin Earl Darrington as Frederick Douglass

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse announces initial casting for its upcoming world-premiere musical **3 Summers of Lincoln**, book by **Joe DiPietro**; lyrics by **Daniel J. Watts** and **Joe DiPietro**; music by **Crystal Monee Hall**; co-choreography by **Jon Rua** and **Daniel J. Watts**; directed by **Christopher Ashley**, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, featuring Tony Award winner **Brian Stokes Mitchell** (Broadway's *Kiss Me, Kate, Ragtime*) as President Abraham Lincoln, running **February 18 – March 23, 2025** in the Playhouse's Mandell Weiss Theatre. Tickets are currently available via subscription at lajollaplayhouse.org. Single tickets will go on sale in November.

The cast will also feature Broadway veterans **Eric Anderson** (La Jolla Playhouse's *Fly*, Broadway's *The Great Gatsby*) as George B. McClellan; **Carmen Cusack** (Broadway's *Bright Star, Flying Over Sunset*) as Mary Todd Lincoln; and **Quentin Earl Darrington** (Broadway's *MJ: The Musical, Once on This Island*) as Frederick Douglass. Additional casting will be announced at a later date.

"What an honor to have this incredible group of actors on board to embody their four riveting characters in *3 Summers of Lincoln*," said **Ashley**. "Each one brings boundless talent and keen insight to the project, and I am so looking forward to collaborating with them on this bold new work that spotlights a history-changing friendship through a singular lens and soaring original music."

Summer, 1862. The bloody conflict that was supposed to last only 90 days has now been raging for more than a year. President Abraham Lincoln must find a way to end the Civil War. Enter powerful abolitionist Frederick Douglass. If he can meet Lincoln face to face, he can help the president cement a vision of the future that ends slavery along with the war, all while preserving the Union. Just three meetings took place between the two men—pivotal conversations between two fierce and equally brilliant leaders that shaped the course of history. This gripping new musical marks the sixth Playhouse collaboration between Joe DiPietro and Christopher Ashley (including the hit shows *Babbitt, Diana* and *Memphis*) and they're thrilled to be joined by Crystal Monee Hall, Daniel J. Watts and Jon Rua. Featuring an epic score that blends gospel, R&B, powerhouse anthems and Broadway, **3 Summers of Lincoln** tells the inspirational story of one of the most important friendships in our nation's history, and that of a brutally divided country coming together.

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Eric Anderson can currently be seen as Meyer Wolfsheim in the Broadway production of *The Great Gatsby*. For the past two years, he starred as Harold Zidler in Broadway's *Moulin Rouge!*. Following his debut 15 years ago in *South Pacific* at Lincoln Center, Eric has gone on to originate roles on Broadway in *Waitress* (Cal), *Pretty Woman* (Mr. Thompson), *Kinky Boots*, *Rocky*, *The Last Ship*, and as Shlomo Carlebach in *Soul Doctor*, for which he earned a Drama Desk Best Actor nomination. He made his La Jolla Playhouse debut as Captain Hook in *Fly*. Regionally, his West Coast credits include: Tateh in *Ragtime* (Moonlight Stage), Kolya in *Bed & Sofa* (Cygnet Theatre), Burrs in *The Wild Party* (Blank Theatre Company), and the title role in *OthE.L.O.* (Troubadour Theater Company). He has appeared on film in *The Greatest Showman* and *Waitress: Live on Broadway*, and has been seen on television in *Elementary*, *The Good Wife*, *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, *Alias* and *Live From Lincoln Center*. Eric has won two San Diego Theatre Critics Circle Awards, and was the recipient of the inaugural Joel Hirschhorn award from the L.A. Drama Critics Circle for outstanding achievement in musical theatre.

Carmen Cusack recently starred on Broadway in James Lapine's *Flying Over Sunset*, earning a second Tony Award nomination in as many Broadway shows. She was previously nominated for her acclaimed lead performance in *Bright Star*. She recurred opposite Janet McTeer and Elizabeth Olsen in the series, *Sorry For Your Loss*, and she was featured opposite Tom Hanks in TriStar's *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* and in MGM's *American Fiction*. She starred as Julia Sugarbaker in the world premiere adaptation of *Designing Women* at TheatreSquared and as Lynn Gardner in MCC's Off-Broadway revival of *Carrie*. Additional credits include Annie McDougan in *First Wives Club* and Dot in *Sunday in the Park with George* in Chicago, Nellie Forbush in the first national tour of Lincoln Center Theater's revival of *South Pacific*, and Elphaba in the first national tour of *Wicked*. West End credits include Fantine in *Les Misérables*, Rose in *The Secret Garden*, and Kim in *Personals*. She toured the UK as Christine in *Phantom of the Opera* and as Eva Cassidy in *Over the Rainbow*. She studied opera at the University of North Texas, which gave her its first honorary baccalaureate degree in 2018.

Quentin Earl Darrington was most recently seen as Don Cornelius in the world premiere of the high-energy, Broadway-bound new musical *Soul Train*, following his electric and transformative dual role as Rob/Joe Jackson in the Broadway mega-hit *MJ the Musical*, which he originated. A Grammy-nominated performer, his Broadway credits also include: Agwe in the Tony Award-winning revival of *Once on This Island*, Coalhouse Walker Jr. in *Ragtime* (revival), and Old Deuteronomy in *Cats* (revival). God's blessing on Q's life has taken him across the globe; performing, teaching, and serving in 46 US states, Canada, the Caribbean, South America, Europe, Russia, New Zealand, and Africa. National Tours: *Memphis*, *The Color Purple*, *The Lion King*, *Ragtime*. TV: *Blue Bloods*, *NCIS: NOLA*, *The Blacklist*, *Elementary*, *Madam Secretary*, *The Good Fight* and *The Code*. MFA-University of Central Florida, BFA-University of South Florida. Love God, Serve God... Love People, Serve People. Philippians 3:12-14

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Brian Stokes Mitchell is a Tony Award-winning actor, singer and music producer who has garnered numerous accolades for his artistry on Broadway, television, film and the concert world. Broadway credits include *Shuffle Along*, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, *Man of La Mancha* (Tony Award nomination, Helen Hayes Award), August Wilson's *King Hedley II* (Tony nomination), *Kiss Me, Kate* (Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Awards), *Ragtime* (Tony nomination), *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Jelly's Last Jam*, *Oh, Kay!* and *Mail* (Theatre World Award). Off-Broadway: *Much Ado About Nothing* (Delacorte Theater) and *The Bandwagon*, *Kismet*, *Do Re Mi* and *Carnival* at City Center Encores!. He has enjoyed more than 40 years on film and television that began with a guest starring role on *Roots: The Next Generations* which led to roles on *Trapper John, M.D.*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *Frasier*, *The Prince of Egypt* (singing "Through Heaven's Eyes"), *Jumping the Broom*, *Glee* and more recently *Mr. Robot*, *Billions*, *Evil*, *The Blacklist*, *Tick Tick Boom*, *Centaurworld*, *Run the World*, *East New York*, *Up Here* and the upcoming feature film *Shirley* with Regina King. Concert venues include: Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Disney Hall, The Kennedy Center, The Hollywood Bowl and Tanglewood, performing with artists such as Dianne Reeves, Bobby McFerrin, John Williams and the Muppets. He has performed twice at the White House, his most recent being "A Celebration of American Creativity" with Audra McDonald, which aired on PBS. Stokes has appeared on more than 20 albums, including his three self-produced solo albums, the most recent being *Plays with Music*. In 2016 Stokes was inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame and also awarded his second Tony Award for his work with The Entertainment Community Fund (formerly the Actors Fund) where he has served for 24 years. He just stepped down from his 19-year tenure as Chairman. During the pandemic, Stokes made international news by serenading his fellow New Yorkers from his apartment window every night for two and a half months. In the Spring of 2022 he received an honorary Doctorate from Boston Conservatory at Berklee and in June of 2023 received the John Willis Lifetime Achievement Theatre World Award. 2024 brought him a second Honorary Doctorate from Manhattan School of Music. On July 22, 2024, Stokes released his new video, [HOPE](#) featuring Jason Robert Brown, the composer, on the piano. Stokes is not only the video's vocalist, he also conceived it, edited it and shot the opening and closing footage. This is available on YouTube. The same day the TedTalk Lear deBessonet gave with Stokes, entitled "What's possible when the arts belong to everybody," was released, available at Ted.com. Stokes is a member of the Artist Committee for Lincoln Center, serves on the board of Americans for the Arts, and is one of the founding members of [Black Theatre United](#). Stokes has flown planes, jumped out of them (though not at the same time) and ridden a bicycle on a high wire. For more information, visit brianstokes.com or his YouTube page, Brian Stokes Mitchell.

Joe DiPietro has won two Tony Awards, a Drama Desk Award and three Outer Critics Circle Awards. He is thrilled to return to La Jolla Playhouse. His newest musical, *Sinatra*, recently premiered at Birmingham Rep to critical acclaim. Some of his other shows include *Memphis* (2010 Tony Award for Best Musical); *Nice Work If You Can Get It* (which starred Matthew Broderick and received 10 Tony nominations); *The Toxic Avenger* (OCC Award - Best Off-Broadway Musical); *Ernest Shackleton Loves Me* (Off-Broadway Alliance Award - Best Musical); *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (longest-running musical revue in off-Broadway history); as well as the much-produced comedies *Clever Little Lies* and *Over the River and Through the Woods*, among others. His latest La Jolla Playhouse premieres include the world-premiere adaptation of *Babbitt*, starring Matthew Broderick, and the musical *Diana*, which can be seen on Netflix and recently made its UK premiere in a special concert presentation in the West End.

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Crystal Monee Hall is a singer/songwriter, composer/lyricist and vocal director/arranger/ producer based in NYC. Recent credits include *Goddess* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre), *ALLSWELL the Movie* (Dir. Ben Snyder), *Choir Boy* (Philadelphia Theatre Company), Darius De Haas' *You Send Me: The Songs and Soul of Sam Cooke* (92Y Lyrics and Lyricists), *Where We Dwell* (New York City Center), Ayodele Casel's *Chasing Magic* (American Repertory Theater), *Walker* (CW network), "A Beautiful Noise" (Gospel Arrangement, Biden/Harris Campaign), *Ben Platt: Live From Radio City Music Hall* (Netflix), PBS Kids (*Donkey Hodie*, *Nature Cat*, *Alma's Way*), *Sesame Street*, *Black Ink Crew* (VH1), HBO's *High Maintenance*, Kristin Chenoweth's *For the Girls* (Nederlander Theater), *Stars on Stage: Brandon Victor Dixon* (Westport Playhouse Theater/PBS), *Cynthia Erivo: Live From Lincoln Center* (PBS), Micky Hart (The Grateful Dead), *RENT* (Nederlander Theater), Thomas Rhett, Renee Elise Goldsberry, John Legend, Patti Austin, Oleta Adams, Mariah Carey, Elton John, Ke\$ha and Roy Ayers. She is the recipient of The Lilly Awards' 2021 "Go Write a Musical" Award, and the Black Theatre Coalition's inaugural Composer Fellowship Award in 2022. www.crystalmoneehall.com; @crystalmonee

Daniel J. Watts is a Tony and Emmy Award-nominated multidisciplinary artist. He has performed in 10 Broadway shows including: *Tina* (Ike Turner, Tony nominee), *Freestyle Love Supreme*, *Hamilton*, *After Midnight*, *Motown*, *Ghost*, *In the Heights*, *Memphis*, *The Little Mermaid*, *The Color Purple*. Off-Broadway: *The Refuge Plays* (Roundabout), *Richard III* (Delacort), *The Last of the Love Letters* (Atlantic), *The Death of the Last Back Man in the Whole Entire World* (Signature), *Whorl Inside a Loop* (2ST). TV: *Werewolf By Night* (Disney+), *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (Amazon), *The Last OG* (TBS), *Vinyl* (HBO), *The Deuce* (HBO), *Boardwalk Empire* (HBO), *Blindspot* (CBS), *Blue Bloods* (CBS), *Broad City* (Comedy Central). Original Work: *Daniel J. Watts' The Jam: Only Child* 2020 Public Theatre Under The Radar Festival and has also streamed as part of the Signature Theater (DC) 2020/21 season. TED talk "To Accomplish Great Things, You Need to Let Paint Dry" appears at go.Ted.com/danieljwatts. Artist in residence at ASU Gammage, contributing artist for Armstrong Now with The Louis Armstrong House, and NYU Tisch New Studio adjunct professor. www.wattswords.com IG/Twitter: @dwattswords

The recipient of the 2022 SDCF Breakout Award, **Jon Rua** is recognized as a "rising star" creative director and choreographer for his innovative work on stage. He has helmed Phish's "Send in the Clones" performance at the sold-out Madison Square Garden, co-choreographed individual production numbers for Broadway's *The Cher Show*, *SpongeBob Squarepants*, *SpongeBob Musical Live* on Nick, the rom-com *Isn't It Romantic*, and numerous regional productions, such as *The Unauthorized Untitled Hunter S. Thompson Musical* (LJP), *Rent* (OSF), *West Side Story* (Milwaukee Rep), *Godspell* (PCLO), *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Aida* (Muny). Crossing all mediums, Jon has conceived music videos and commercials for Coheed & Cambria ("Old Flames"), Lawrence ("More"), and the New York Lotto, to name a few. Coming up later this year, Jon is the associate choreographer for the new musical *BOOP! The Musical*. As a performer, Jon has been a part of four Tony-nominated Broadway shows, originating roles in the Tony and Grammy Award-winning hit musical *Hamilton*, *SpongeBob Squarepants*, *Hands on a Hardbody* and *In the Heights*. On screen, Rua has guest-starred on *Blacklist*, *Blue Bloods*, *Law & Order*, and in films such as *Fall to Rise*, *First Reformed*, and *Isn't It Romantic*. Always innovating and creating, Jon's explorative short film *Unknown* (actor, writer, director, dancer, choreographer, producer) was selected for the 2022 New York Latino Film Festival; and currently, *First Gen*, a new play with movement and music (actor, writer, dancer, choreographer producer), has been commissioned and is set for a 2025 world premiere.

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Tony Award winner **Christopher Ashley** has served as La Jolla Playhouse's Artistic Director since 2007. During his tenure, he directed the world premieres of *Come From Away*, *The Untitled Unauthorized Hunter S. Thompson Musical*, *Babbitt*, *Diana*, *Memphis*, *Escape to Margaritaville*, *The Squirrels*, *A Dram of Drummhicit*, *Restoration* and *Chasing the Song*, as well as *His Girl Friday*, *As You Like It*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Freaky Friday* and *Xanadu*. He also spearheaded the Without Walls (WOW) initiative, the DNA New Work Series and the Theatre-in-Residence program. Ashley recently directed *Come From Away* for AppleTV+ and *Diana: The Musical* for Netflix. Other screen credits include the feature films *Jeffrey* and *Lucky Stiff*, and the American Playhouse production of *Blown Sideways Through Life* for PBS. Broadway credits include *Come From Away* (Tony and Outer Critics Circle Awards), *Diana: The Musical*, *Escape to Margaritaville*, *Memphis* (Tony nomination), *Xanadu*, *Leap of Faith* (Drama Desk Award nomination), *All Shook Up* and *The Rocky Horror Show* (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle Award nominations). He also helmed productions of *Come From Away* in London (Olivier Award nomination), Toronto, Australia and on national tour. Other national tours include *Escape to Margaritaville*, *Memphis*, *Xanadu*, *All Shook Up* and *Seussical: The Musical*. Additional New York stage credits include *Blown Sideways Through Life*, *Jeffrey* (Lucille Lortel and Obie Awards), *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told*, *Valhalla* (Lucille Lortel Award nomination), *Regrets Only*, *Wonder of the World*, *Communicating Doors*, *Bunny, Bunny*, *The Night Hank Williams Died* and *Fires in the Mirror* (Lucille Lortel Award), among others. Mr. Ashley is the recipient of the Princess Grace Award, the Drama League Director Fellowship and an NEA/TCG Director Fellowship.

La Jolla Playhouse is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what's new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer, the Playhouse is currently led by Tony Award winner Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, and Managing Director Debby Buchholz. The Playhouse is internationally renowned for the development of new works, including mounting 120 world premieres, commissioning 70 new works, and sending 36 productions to Broadway, garnering a total of 42 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

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