

JESSICA STONE APPOINTED ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE

Nationally Acclaimed Director Tapped to Lead Tony Award-Winning Theatre

La Jolla, CA – The Board of Trustees of La Jolla Playhouse is pleased to announce the appointment of renowned, two-time Tony Award-nominated director **Jessica Stone** (*Kimberly Akimbo*, *Water for Elephants*) as the Playhouse's new Artistic Director.

"On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the search committee, we are delighted to welcome Jessica Stone to the Playhouse family. Jessica's incredible directorial credits, her inspiring and collaborative leadership style, along with her passion for making bold, compelling theatre, make her the ideal choice to take the artistic reins of La Jolla Playhouse," said **Board Chair Denise Bevers**.

"Jessica's artistic vision is truly exhilarating. She has a deep understanding of the Playhouse culture and our commitment to being a safe harbor for the development of exciting new work. The entire Playhouse staff and board look forward to working with her, and I can't think of a better partner to co-lead this organization," noted La Jolla Playhouse **Managing Director Debby Buchholz**.

Stone succeeds Christopher Ashley, who served as the Playhouse's Artistic Director since 2008. Ashley announced his departure in September 2024 to take on the role of Artistic Director of New York's Roundabout Theatre. Stone will officially begin her role at the Playhouse in early 2026. In partnership with Buchholz, Stone will guide the organization's mission and vision.

"Joining this resoundingly successful company, one that has local and national reach, one that is a home for new work, one that cares deeply about cultivating new audiences, one that believes in educational and community outreach, and one that pushes the boundaries of what theater can be – is thrilling to me," remarked **Stone**. "La Jolla Playhouse is one of the foremost theatres in the country, and I am honored to be a part of its storied history, to build on Christopher Ashley's legacy, and imagine ways in which to expand its possibilities for nurturing artists and audiences."

Acclaimed director Jessica Stone was most recently nominated for a Tony Award for directing the original Broadway musical *Water for Elephants* in 2024. She also won the Outer Critics Circle and Drama Desk Awards for Best Director for *Water for Elephants*. In 2023 she received a Tony Award nomination for her direction of *Kimberly Akimbo*, which won five Tony Awards, including Best Musical.

Stone worked as an actress on and off-Broadway, in television and in film for decades before transitioning to directing. Broadway credits included *Anything Goes*, *Butley*, *The Odd Couple*, *The Smell of the Kill*, *Design for Living*, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* and *Grease*.

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Stone's directing career began in earnest with her all-male 2010 production of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* for Williamstown Theatre Festival. She has since been directing all over the country at such theaters as A.C.T., Shakespeare Theatre Company, Huntington Theatre Company, The Old Globe, Two River Theatre Company, and Williamstown Theatre Festival, among others. Productions include *As You Like It*, Kate Hamill's *Vanity Fair*, *Barefoot in the Park*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Bad Dates*, Ken Ludwig's *Robin Hood!* (world premiere), *Ripcord*, *Bad Jews*, *Arms and the Man*, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *Charlotte's Web*, *June Moon*, *Last of the Red Hot Lovers*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Absurd Person Singular*, and *Kimberly Akimbo* (off-Broadway premiere at the Atlantic).

[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 internationally renowned for the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 120 world premieres, commissioning 70 new works, and sending 37 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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