

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE'S 2025 GALA TO CELEBRATE THE LEGACY OF EXTRAORDINARY PHILANTHROPIST AND TRUSTEE JOAN JACOBS

Chaired by Debby Jacobs, the Night Will Feature Stellar Performances by Broadway Stars Nikki M. James, Paul Alexander Nolan, and Ryan Vasquez

La Jolla, CA – On Saturday, March 29, 2025, the La Jolla Playhouse will host one of the most exciting events of the year — the annual Gala, chaired by Playhouse Trustee Debby Jacobs. Proceeds from this vibrant celebration will support the Playhouse's groundbreaking New Play Development and Learning & Engagement programs, ensuring the future of innovative theatre.

This year's Gala will shine a spotlight on the extraordinary legacy of Joan Jacobs (1933–2024), a cherished philanthropist and devoted advocate of the Playhouse for nearly 40 years. Joan's passion for the Playhouse, her transformative leadership on the Board of Trustees, and her unshakable commitment to both our stage and community were pivotal in shaping the Playhouse into the creative powerhouse it is today. Her impact is felt at every level, and we are thrilled to honor her lifelong dedication to the arts and to the future of Playhouse.

Guests will be treated to a thrilling lineup of performances by Broadway and Playhouse favorites, including Tony Award winner **Nikki M. James** (Playhouse's *The Wiz*; Broadway's *Suffs*, *Book of Mormon*), **Paul Alexander Nolan** (Playhouse's *Escape to Margaritaville*; Broadway's *Water for Elephants*), and **Ryan Vasquez** (Playhouse's *The Outsiders*; Broadway's *The Notebook*). There will also be special appearances by Voices of our City Choir and the Rancho Buena Vista High School Marching Band. These powerhouse performers are set to light up the night with a series of unforgettable musical numbers.

The evening kicks off with a lively cocktail party at 6:00 pm in the Sheila and Hughes Potiker Theatre Lobby and Taper Plaza, located in the stunning Joan and Irwin Jacobs Theatre District. Inside the Potiker Theatre, which will be magically transformed into an intimate cabaret setting, complete with luxurious booth seating, guests will enjoy a feast for the senses, with a menu by the acclaimed Chef Jeffrey Strauss of Pamplemousse Grille.

Guests at the Commanderie and Sommelier ticket levels will enjoy a curated, a one-of-a-kind wine experience aided by our very generous Wine Hosts. Led by Wine Chairs Gail and Ralph Bryan, these expert wine aficionados will guide guests through a journey of fine wines from their private collections taking the Gala experience to a whole new level.

After the show, guests will dance the night away at our high-energy after-party, where DJ and musician Alex Seaver (aka **Mako**) will keep the beats going. Craft cocktails from Snake Oil Cocktail Co. and some sweet treats at the J & I Creamery are the ultimate way to cap off an unforgettable night.

The 2025 Gala Committee, led by Chair Debby Jacobs, also includes Denise Bevers, Randy Camp, Lisa Casey, Randall Clark, Annie Ellis, Kay Gurtin, Luke Gulley, Dean Haas, Lindsey Jacobs, Lynelle Lynch, Christy Molasky, Robin Rusinko, Karen Silberman, Rachel Terrones, and Lise Wilson—bringing together some of the most passionate and dedicated supporters of the Playhouse.

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Gala sponsors include UC San Diego, Van Cleef & Arpels, Merrill Lynch, Bank of America and Show Imaging. For more information about tickets and sponsorship opportunities for the Playhouse Gala, please contact gala@ljp.org

Gala Artist Biographies

Nikki M. James can be seen as Kirsten McDuffie in the hit Disney+ show *Daredevil*. She was nominated for a Tony Award for her performance as Ida B Wells in *Suffs*. She originated the role of Nabalungi in *The Book of Mormon*, for which she won the Tony for Best Featured Actress in a Musical. Favorite theater credits include Tony Kushner's *A Bright Room Called Day* (Public), Broadway productions of *Les Miserables*, *All Shook Up* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin* (Encores!), *Romeo & Juliet*, *Caesar & Cleopatra* alongside Christopher Plummer (Stratford Theater), *The Wiz* (La Jolla Playhouse), *Julius Caesar*, *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare in the Park), *Bernarda Alba* (Lincoln Center), and *Preludes* (LCT3). Recent notable work in television includes *Severance* (AppleTV+) and starring roles in *Proven Innocent* for FOX and CBS's quirky series *Braindead*. As a director, Nikki has helmed episodes of *The Bite* and *The Good Fight*. She served as an assistant director to Michael Arden for the Broadway revival of *Once On This Island* and *A Christmas Carol* live capture starring Jefferson Mays. She resides in New York City with her family and holds a BFA in Drama from NYU. She is a sustaining member of her local public radio station. @nikkimjames

Paul Alexander Nolan has appeared at La Jolla Playhouse as Jesus in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Tully in *Escape to Margaritaville*, both of which transferred to Broadway; and Ben in the world premiere of *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*. Paul's 2024 starring role as August in *Water for Elephants* marked his 10th Broadway show. The year before, he played prosecutor Hugh Dorsey in the Tony-winning revival of *Parade*. In 2021, he starred in the second most Tony-nominated play in history, *Slave Play*. Other Broadway roles include Guy in *Once*, *Bright Star* (Drama Desk Award nomination), *Doctor Zhivago* (Outer Critics Circle Award nomination) and *Chicago*. Before moving from Canada to New York, Paul spent six seasons at the Stratford Festival in Ontario. Television credits include HBO's *The Gilded Age* and *The Code*, *Madam Secretary* and *Instinct* for CBS.

Ryan Vasquez has performed on Broadway in *The Notebook*, *Wicked*, *Waitress* and *Hamilton*, where he became the only actor to play all the roles of Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, George Washington, Marquis de Lafayette/Thomas Jefferson, and Hercules Mulligan/James Madison on Broadway. He also originated the role of The Man in Black in *The Wrong Man* at MCC Theater, for which he received a Drama Desk Award nomination, as well as leading roles in the world premiere productions of *The Notebook* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *The Outsiders* (La Jolla Playhouse), *Water for Elephants* (Alliance Theater) and *Schmigadoon!* (The Kennedy Center). Ryan had the privilege of returning to MCC for the world premiere of *Walk On Through: Confessions of a Museum Novice*, written by Tony Award-winner and mentor, Gavin Creel. Ryan has been seen on screen in *The Good Fight* (CBS), *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (HBO), *The Code* (CBS) and the film adaptation of *Tick...Tick...BOOM!* (Netflix), directed by Lin Manuel-Miranda, starring Andrew Garfield. The proud son of an educator, Ryan has also worked as a teacher at the elementary, pre-college, and university level.

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Los Angeles-based composer, songwriter and record producer **Alex Seaver** has made an immediate mark with a unique and versatile approach spanning genres and influences of music. The Juilliard-trained artist has earned 150-million combined streams to date as frontman for Pop/Electronic project **Mako**, while contributing music across film, television, video games, radio, and streaming services. As a performer, he has toured internationally with artist David Guetta, performed at the Coachella and Lollapalooza music festivals, in addition to headlining tours across North America and orchestral appearances at Carnegie Hall. Seaver's work as a pop songwriter has earned him credits with Avicii, Steve Angello, Alan Walker, Madison Beer, R3hab, and Against The Current.

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-winning Artistic Director Christopher Ashley and Managing Director Debby Buchholz. 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 – including the current hit musicals *The Outsiders* and *Redwood* – garnering a total of 42 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

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