

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES COMPLETE CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM FOR *3 SUMMERS OF LINCOLN*

Ivan Hernandez Will Play President Abraham Lincoln

World-Premiere Musical to Begin Performances February 18

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse announces **Ivan Hernandez** (La Jolla Playhouse's *Zhivago*, Broadway's *Dear Evan Hansen*) will play President Abraham Lincoln in its upcoming world premiere of ***3 Summers of Lincoln***, book by **Joe DiPietro**; lyrics by **Daniel J. Watts** and **Joe DiPietro**; music by **Crystal Monee Hall**; choreography by **Jon Rua** and **Daniel J. Watts**; and directed by **Christopher Ashley**, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse. The production will run **February 18 – March 23, 2025** in the Playhouse's Mandell Weiss Theatre. For tickets and information, visit lajollaplayhouse.org.

The cast features the previously-announced 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. They will be joined by **Ivan Hernandez**, along with **John-Andrew Morrison** as William Slade and **Saycon Sengbloh** as Elizabeth Keckley, and ensemble members **Geno Carr**, **Alaman Diadiou**, **Fernell Hogan**, **Jana Krumholtz**, **Bets Malone**, **Magic Mosley**, **Kent D'Angelo James Overshown**, **Noah Rivera**, **Naomi Tiana Rodgers**, **Evan Ruggiero**, **Nathan Salstone**, **Johnathan Tanner** and **Blake Zelesnikar**, plus swings: **Van Angelo**, **DeShawn Travis Bowens**, **Michael Samarie George**, **Michael Allan Haggerty**, **Jaxon Smith**.

The creative team includes: **Derek McLane**, Scenic Designer; **Toni-Leslie James**, Costume Designer; **Amanda Zieve**, Lighting Designer; **Jonathan Deans** and **Mike Tracey**, Co-Sound Designers; **David Bengali** and **Hana S. Kim**, Co-Projection Designers; **Matthew Armentrout**, Wig and Hair Designer; **Wilkie Ferguson**, Music Supervisor; **Victoria Theodore**, Music Director; **Michael Thurber**, Orchestrator; **Ann James**, Sensitivity Specialist; **The Telsey Office**, **Rachel Hoffman, CSA** and **Jacole Kitchen**, Casting; **James Latus**, Stage Manager; **Alexa Burn** and **Monét Thibou**, Assistant Stage Managers.

"I cannot think of a better time in our society to bring this bold new work to our audiences," said **Ashley**. "It is an honor to collaborate with this stellar cast and creative team on a world-premiere musical that spotlights a history-changing friendship through an extraordinary lens and soaring original music."

3 Summers of Lincoln is a gripping new musical that tells the inspirational story of one of the most important friendships in our nation's history, and a divided country coming together. Summer, 1862. 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 brilliant leaders that shaped the course of history. This is the sixth Playhouse collaboration between Joe DiPietro and Christopher Ashley (including the hit shows *Babbitt* and *Memphis*). Composer Crystal Monee Hall and lyricist Daniel J. Watts complete the multi-award-winning creative team. With an epic original score blending gospel, R&B and powerhouse anthems, ***3 Summers of Lincoln*** is the next unmissable world premiere from La Jolla Playhouse.

The production had originally been announced with Brian Stokes Mitchell in the title role. Mitchell stated, "It is with great regret that due to a personal matter I will be unable to join ***3 Summers of Lincoln*** at La Jolla Playhouse within the timeframe of the production."

– more –

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.

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), Mickey 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. 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*, *The Deuce*, *Boardwalk Empire* (HBO), *Blindspot*, *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. wattswords.com; @dwattswords.

– more –

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.

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.

– more –

FACT SHEET

What: *3 Summers of Lincoln*
Book by Joe DiPietro
Lyrics by Daniel J. Watts and Joe DiPietro
Music by Crystal Monee Hall
Choreography by Jon Rua and Daniel J. Watts
Directed by Christopher Ashley

When: February 18 – March 25 (Press Dates TBD)
Tue/Wed/Thu/Fri at 7:30pm; Sat at 2pm & 8pm; Sun at 1pm & 7pm

Where: Mandell Weiss Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse
2910 La Jolla Village Drive, La Jolla, CA 92037

Who: Scenic Design: Derek McLane
Costume Design: Toni-Leslie James
Lighting Design: Amanda Zieve
Sound Design: Jonathan Deans, Mike Tracey
Projection Design: David Bengali, Hana Kim
Wig and Hair Design: Matthew Armentrout
Music Supervisor: Wilkie Ferguson
Music Director: Victoria Theodore
Orchestrator: Michael Thurber
Sensitivity Specialist: Ann James
Casting: The Telsey Office, Rachel Hoffman, CSA; Jacole Kitchen
Stage Manager: James Latus
Assistant Stage Managers: Alexa Burn, Monét Thibou

Cast:

<i>George B. McClellan</i>	Eric Anderson
<i>Mary Todd Lincoln</i>	Carmen Cusack
<i>Frederick Douglass</i>	Quentin Earl Darrington
<i>President Abraham Lincoln</i>	Ivan Hernandez
<i>William Slade</i>	John-Andrew Morrison
<i>Elizabeth Keckley</i>	Saycon Sengbloh

Ensemble: Geno Carr, Alaman Diadhiou, Fernell Hogan, Jana Krumholtz, Bets Malone, Magic Mosley, Kent D'Angelo James Overshown, Noah Rivera, Naomi Tiana Rodgers, Evan Ruggiero, Nathan Salstone, Johnathan Tanner, Blake Zelesnikar

Swings: Van Angelo, DeShawn Travis Bowens, Michael Samarie George, Michael Allan Haggerty, Jaxon Smith

Background: This gripping new musical tells the inspirational story of one of the most important friendships in our nation's history, and a divided country coming together. Summer, 1862. 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 brilliant leaders that shaped the course of history. With an epic original score blending gospel, R&B, and powerhouse anthems, *3 Summers of Lincoln* is the next unmissable, spectacular world premiere from La Jolla Playhouse.

Sponsors: Sheri L. Jamieson; Laurents/Hatcher Foundation; Bank of America; La Cuisine Custom Catering, Show Imaging; Recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award.

#