

## LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE NAMES COMMON GROUND THEATRE AS 2022/2023 THEATRE-IN-RESIDENCE

LA JOLLA, CA — La Jolla Playhouse is pleased to announce **Common Ground Theatre** as its **2022/2023 Theatre-in-Residence**. Spearheaded by Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, the Theatre-in-Residence program aims to encourage the artistic development of local performing arts organizations, while contributing to the San Diego theatre scene as a whole. The program provides a temporary home each year to a local company without a permanent venue, including performance space, lighting and sound support, as well as marketing and development mentorship and assistance.

“Now in its 12th year, the Theatre-in-Residence program has given the Playhouse the opportunity to partner with so many of the vibrant theater companies in our community, and it’s a joy to have Common Ground Theatre join that roster,” said **Ashley**. “Common Ground has a long, rich history in San Diego, and we are honored to serve as their home during the 2022/2023 season.”

Common Ground Theatre will kick off their residency with **Still We Rise**, a celebration concert on **Saturday, July 9** in the Theodore and Adele Shank Theatre. This poetry and jazz-infused concert features work by such historic black poets as Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes and Amanda Gorman, along with a 3-piece band. The residency will also include a workshop production of the new play **Sense of Love**, by Sheryl Mallory Johnson, as well as a monthly **Uplifting Black Voices Play Reading Series** from playwrights who identify as black and/or intersect with blackness.

The **Theatre-in-Residence Program** is part of La Jolla Playhouse’s overall commitment to fostering artistic relationships and the development of new work. Previous resident theatres include Mo’olelo Performing Arts Company, Moxie Theatre, San Diego Asian American Repertory Theater, Eveoke Dance Theatre, Teatro Máscara Mágica, Circle Circle dot dot, Native Voices at the Autry, Backyard Renaissance and Blindspot Collective.

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**Common Ground Theatre** has made a broad and important impact in San Diego County. It is the only theatre in the San Diego area whose primary goal is to regularly and consistently offer high quality classic and new works by and about Black people. It provides theatrical productions at a low price in an area that has a dearth of arts and cultural opportunities for its residents. It develops budding Black artistic talent which supplies a core group of performers not only for Common Ground Theatre productions, but for many other theatres in the San Diego area. Most of the African American actors who have performed at other theatres in the San Diego region were first trained and developed by Common Ground Theatre. Common Ground provides employment for Black actors and other actors in the San Diego area. During the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic and the violent and deadly attacks against Blacks revealing the continued racial injustice, Common Ground Theatre's board members and Executive Artistic Director Yolanda Franklin have participated and provided leadership. In the past two years they have played a central role in Zoom presentations and discussions regarding the role of San Diego's theatre community in combatting social, cultural, racial, and artistic injustice.

As the major Black theatre in San Diego, Common Ground Theatre's Executive Artistic Director Yolanda Franklin is frequently called upon to provide leadership in the arts and cultural community, to network and collaborate with other arts and cultural organizations, and to help to provide solutions to healing the local and national racial divide. Ms. Franklin focused the theme of their 2020-2021 Season on "Uplifting Black Voices: Raising Our Consciousness to a Higher Level." The first production during was "Dinner and a Zoom," a series of four plays focusing on new one-act plays by Black women, directed by Franklin and presented in collaboration with Moxie Theatre. The next series, performed in December 2020 highlights three contemporary plays by Black men. Other digital performances for January through June 2021 included new original digital short plays focused on Black mental health, senior citizens, LGBTQ, biracial issues, Black youth issues, and human rights. The 2021-2022 Season focused on the same theme: "Continuing To Raise Our Consciousness To A Higher Level" with a co-production with Diversionary Theatre of *One In Two*, by Donja Love in August of 2021. This was followed by a first-time collaboration between Common Ground and Playwrights Projects for the community in September 2021. They then hosted Common Ground's Black History and Juneteenth events in the Market Creek Plaza in collaboration with Jacob's Center for Neighborhood Innovation. Now Common Ground Theatre is excited to present its 59<sup>th</sup> Season, July 2022-June 2023, which includes a year-long residency at La Jolla Playhouse.

**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. Currently led by Tony Award-winning Artistic Director Christopher Ashley and Managing Director Debby Buchholz, the Playhouse was founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer. Playhouse artists and audiences have taken part in the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 108 world premieres, commissioning 50 new works, and sending 33 productions to Broadway, among them the hit musical *Come From Away* – garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, including the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. For more information, visit [LaJollaPlayhouse.org](https://www.lajollaplayhouse.org).

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