

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM FOR *THE UNTITLED UNAUTHORIZED HUNTER S. THOMPSON MUSICAL*

World-Premiere Musical to Begin Performances August 29

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse announces the cast and creative team for its world-premiere production of *The Untitled Unauthorized Hunter S. Thompson Musical*, music and lyrics by **Joe Iconis** (*Be More Chill*), book by **Joe Iconis** and **Gregory S. Moss**, choreographed by **Jon Rua** (*Hands on a Hardbody*) and directed by Tony Award winner **Christopher Ashley**, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse (*Come From Away*), running in the Playhouse's Sheila and Hughes Potiker Theatre **August 29 – October 1** (press opening: September 9),. For tickets and information, please visit LaJollaPlayhouse.org.

The cast features **George Abud** (*Lempicka*) as "Nixon," **Jeannette Bayardelle** (*Freaky Friday*) as "Jann," **Giovanny Diaz de Leon** as "The Kid," **Gabriel Ebert** as "Hunter," **Marcy Harriell** as "Sandy," **Lorinda Lisitza** as "Virginia," **Lauren Marcus** as "Flower Child," **George Salazar** as "Oscar," **Ryan Vona** as "Juan," **Jason SweetTooth Williams** (*Freaky Friday*) as "Ralph," along with understudies **Josh Alvarez**, **Summer Broyhill**, **Josiah Cajudo**, **Kürt Norby** and **Nio Russell**.

The creative team includes: **Rick Edinger**, Music Supervisor and Arrangements; **Wilson Chin**, Scenic Designer; **Toni-Leslie James**, Costume Designer; **Amanda Zieve**, Lighting Designer; **Justin Stasiw**, Sound Designer; **Animal Cracker Conspiracy** (Without Walls Festival's *Transmythical*), Puppet Designers; **Alberto "Albee" Alvarado**, Wig & Hair Designer; **Shirley Fishman**, Dramaturg; **Ann James**, Sensitivity Specialist; **Charlie Rosen**, Orchestrator; **The Telsey Office**, **Rachel Hoffman, CSA** and **Jacole Kitchen**, Casting; **Jess Slocum**, Stage Manager; and **Topaz Cooks** and **Nicholas Lambros Smith**, Assistant Stage Managers.

"After several years in development at the Playhouse, I'm ecstatic to unleash the world premiere of this iconoclastic musical as part of our subscription season," said **Ashley**. "Led by a stellar cast and creative team, *Hunter* provocatively portrays the extraordinary life of a counterculture legend who changed the face of journalism, all while championing the voices of the outraged, the outlaws and the outsiders."

Who was Hunter S. Thompson? He changed journalism. He defined counterculture. Equal parts philosopher, clown and genius, he was armed and dangerous with a typewriter as his preferred weapon. Careening from the 1940s to his death in 2005, this gonzo musical blasts into the life of one of America's most influential and destructive icons. In relentless pursuit of the meaning of the American Dream during an era of political and social upheaval, Hunter S. Thompson cultivated a new form of journalism that – for better or worse – injected his subjective view into the heart of the story. Now, in another, even more severe moment of fake news, propaganda and polarization, Hunter's story helps explore how we got here, and how to keep fighting.

Set to Joe Iconis' anarchic and tuneful score, this musical is a rock 'n' roll portrait of an artist seeking greatness and coming to terms with his own legacy.

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Joe Iconis is a musical theatre writer and performer. He has been nominated for a Tony Award, four Drama Desk Awards, two Lucille Lortel Awards, two Outer Critics Circle Awards, and is the recipient of an Ed Kleban Award, a Jonathan Larson Award and a Richard Rodgers Award. His musical *Be More Chill* (with Joe Tracz) has played Broadway, London and Tokyo. Joe is the author of *Love in Hate Nation* (directed by John Simpkins; Two River), *Broadway Bounty Hunter* (with Lance Rubin and Jason SweetTooth Williams; Barrington Stage Company and Greenwich House Theater Off-Broadway), *Bloodsong of Love* (Ars Nova, NAMT), *Punk Rock Girl!* (for Lively McCabe), *The Black Suits* (with Robert Maddock; Center Theatre Group, Barrington Stage Company), *ReWrite* (Urban Stages, Goodspeed), *Things To Ruin* (Second Stage Theater, The Zipper Factory) and Theaterworks USA's *The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks* and *We the People*. His music appeared on season two of NBC's *Smash* and he frequently performs at 54 Below and the Laurie Beechman Theater. Albums: *Album (Joe Iconis & Family)*, *Be More Chill* (OCR and OBCR, which have been streamed over 500 million times); *Broadway Bounty Hunter* (OCR); *Things to Ruin* (OCR); *Two-Player Game* (with George Salazar) and *The Joe Iconis Rock & Roll Jamboree*, all available on Sh-K-Boom/Ghostlight Records. Joe is hugely inspired by Robert Altman, Dolly Parton, The Muppets, and the Family of artists he frequently surrounds himself with.

Gregory S. Moss is a MacDowell Fellow and the recipient of a Jerome Fellowship and a McKnight Fellowship. He is the recipient of the Reva Shiner Comedy Prize and an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award. He's an Affiliated Artist with Clubbed Thumb, and he has served as a mentor for Clubbed Thumb's early career playwrights' group, Columbia University's MFA in Playwriting Program, and through the Playwrights' Center. His work is published by Overlook Press, Dramatists Play Service, Dramatic Publishing Company, Playscripts and in the journals *Play: A Journal of Plays* and *n+1*. He is an Associate Professor of Theatre and Dance at the University of New Mexico and Head of the MFA Dramatic Writing Program. Recent productions include the world premiere of *Indian Summer* at Playwrights Horizons, NYC (Critics' Pick, Time Out New York; The 2016 Edgerton Foundation New Play Award); the UK Premiere of *punkplay* at The Southwark Theatre; *House of Gold* at La Comédie Française, Paris (Winner, Prix du Public), and at EST-LA, Los Angeles (LA Times and LA Weekly Critics' Pick) and at Square Product Theater, Boulder CO.; "I Promised Myself to Live Faster": A Queer Space Opera in the Decadent Style, with Pig Iron Theater Company, Humana Festival of New American Plays, Actors Theatre of Louisville; *Reunion* at South Coast Rep, Costa Mesa, CA (Best New Play of 2014, OC Weekly and StageSourceLA); La Brea, Clubbed Thumb, NYC. He is currently at work on a collection of short stories and his first novel.

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 *Rent* (OSF), *West Side Story* (Milwaukee Rep), *Godspell* (PCLO), *The Hombres* (Two River), *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* set to world premiere in Chicago. 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, choreographer, dancer, producer**) **was selected for the 2022 New York Latino Film Festival**; and currently, *First Gen*, a new play with movement and music (actor, writer, choreographer, dancer, 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*, *Diana: The Musical*, *Memphis*, *Escape to Margaritaville*, *The Squirrels*, *A Dram of Drummhicit*, *Restoration* and *Chasing the Song*, as well as *As You Like It*, *His Girl Friday*, *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 110 world premieres, commissioning 70 new works, and sending 33 productions to Broadway, garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

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FACT SHEET

WHAT: *The Untitled Unauthorized Hunter S. Thompson Musical*
Music and Lyrics by Joe Iconis
Book by Joe Iconis and Gregory S. Moss
Choreographed by Jon Rua
Directed by Christopher Ashley

WHEN: **August 29 – October 1** (Press Opening: September 9 at 8pm)
Tue/Wed at 7:30pm; Thu/Fri/Sat at 8pm; Sun at 7pm; Sat/Sun at 2pm

WHERE: **Sheila and Hughes Potiker Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse**
2910 La Jolla Village Drive, La Jolla, CA 92037

WHO: Rick Edinger, Music Supervisor and Arrangements
Scenic Designer: Wilson Chin
Costume Designer: Toni-Leslie James
Lighting Designer: Amanda Zieve
Sound Designer: Justin Stasiw
Wig and Hair Designer: Alberto “Albee” Alvarado
Puppet Designers: Animal Cracker Conspiracy
Dramaturg: Shirley Fishman
Sensitivity Specialist: Ann James
Orchestrations: Charlie Rosen
Casting: The Telsey Office, Rachel Hoffman, CSA/Jacole Kitchen
Stage Manager: Jess Slocum
Assistant Stage Managers: Topaz Cooks, Nicholas Lambros Smith

Cast:	<i>Nixon</i>	George Abud
	<i>Jann</i>	Jeannette Bayardelle
	<i>The Kid</i>	Giovanny Diaz de Leon
	<i>Hunter</i>	Gabriel Ebert
	<i>Sandy</i>	Marcy Harriell
	<i>Virginia</i>	Lorinda Lisitza
	<i>Flower Child</i>	Lauren Marcus
	<i>Oscar</i>	George Salazar
	<i>Juan</i>	Ryan Vona
	<i>Ralph</i>	Jason SweetTooth Williams

Understudies: Josh Alvarez, Summer Broyhill, Josiah Cajudo,
Kürt Norby, Nio Russell

BACKGROUND: Who was Hunter S. Thompson? He changed journalism. He defined counterculture. Equal parts philosopher, clown and genius, he was armed and dangerous with a typewriter as his preferred weapon. Careening from the 1940s to his death in 2005, this gonzo musical blasts into the life of one of America’s most influential and destructive icons. In relentless pursuit of the meaning of the American Dream during an era of political and social upheaval, Hunter S. Thompson cultivated a new form of journalism that – for better or worse – injected his subjective view into the heart of the story. Now, in another, even more severe moment of fake news, propaganda and polarization, Hunter’s story helps explore how we got here, and how to keep fighting. Set to Joe Iconis’ anarchic and tuneful score, this musical is a rock ‘n’ roll thrill-ride of an artist seeking greatness and coming to terms with his own legacy.

TICKETS: LaJollaPlayhouse.org; (858) 550-1010

SPONSORS: Ted and Paula Adams
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Recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award

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