

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM FOR 2021 PERFORMANCE OUTREACH PROGRAM (POP) TOUR: *PICK ME LAST*

PLAYHOUSE CONTINUES 30+ YEAR TRADITION OF COMMISSIONING WORK FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES WITH NEW PLAY BY IDRIS GOODWIN

2021 POP TOUR TO BE OFFERED AT NO COST TO SCHOOLS IN VIRTUAL FORMAT

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse announces the cast and creative team for its 2021 Performance Outreach Program (POP) Tour production, *Pick Me Last*, by Idris Goodwin, directed by Jacole Kitchen, Playhouse Director of Arts Engagement and In-House Casting. This year's POP Tour will be available in a **virtual format**, which can be accessed any time between the launch date in early May and July, 2021. The piece will be offered for **free** to all San Diego schools, community organizations and families, as well as to those around the country. For more information about booking the POP Tour, visit pop-tour-lajollaplayhouse.com.

The cast features seven recent UC San Diego Theatre & Dance MFA graduates: Anthony Adu as "Wes," Corneilus Franklin as "New Kid/Stranger 1/Mother/Stacy," Rebecca Futterman as "Yancy/Burger/TWFTPOTPWRA," Savanna Padilla as "Chavonne," Cody Sloan as "Bilal/Lorenz/ Ritchie," Emily Stout as "Claire/Freud/Esme" and Lee Vignes as "Musk/Father/ Corey/Stranger 2."

The creative team includes Idris Goodwin, Playwright; Jacole Kitchen, Director; Jonathan Gilmer, Scenic Designer; Carmon Amon, Costume Designer; Lindsay Alayne Stevens, Lighting Designer; Evan Eason, Sound Designer; Madison Mae Williams, Dramaturg; Kira Vine, First Assistant Director; and BluLight Films, Video Production and Direction.

About the Show

They say when a butterfly flaps its wings, the effect is greater than we can ever know. This is called The Butterfly Effect. Ten-year-old Wes is a regular kid who hears music in his mind to drown out the noise of his home, and always gets picked last to play games on the playground. When Wes's best pal Chavonne learns about The Butterfly Effect, she puts a plan in place that just might cause a chain reaction leading to getting herself picked last at recess, therefore causing Wes not to be last for the first time ever. Joined by Sigmund Freud, Elon Musk and others popping in and dropping knowledge, Chavonne embarks on a quest to advocate for Wes, but soon learns that the problem she is trying to fix, may not be the one that needs solving.

"While this year's POP Tour may look a little different, our commitment to introducing young people to theatre hasn't changed. Idris has created a delightful and touching new piece that speaks to issues of self-esteem and inclusion that students face every day, brought to classrooms in a safe, virtual format," said Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse. "It's also extremely gratifying to be able to have UC San Diego MFA students make up the entire cast, offering them both a Playhouse residency, and a chance to practice their craft during a time when many theaters are dark."

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This year's POP Tour will be available in a virtual format as a 45-minute film, with video direction and production from BluLight Films. Their team includes Edwin Franko, Director of Film for BluLight; Rah Davis, Executive Producer for BluLight; Anthony Alegrete, Producer for BluLight and Mark Arica, Director of Photography for BluLight.

The video will showcase the cast performing on a vibrant set with costumes, filmed without an audience within all COVID-19 compliances, and featuring music from Brooklyn-based Afrobeat band Antibalas. The piece will be offered for free to all San Diego schools, community organizations and families, as well as to those around the count from its launch date in early May through July, 2021.

The experience will include closed captioning and audio description accommodations. In addition, teacher and students will have access to a standards-based virtual LJP E-guide which will include lesson plans centering on the show's themes of inclusion and being the new kid, along with creative team interviews, and pre- and post-show engagement activities that educators can integrate into their existing curriculum.

The Playhouse is one of the few theatres in the country that annually commissions world-class artists to create a bold new play for young audiences. Playwrights create an innovative, 45-minute piece that addresses issues in students' lives. Launched in 1987, the POP Tour has been bringing theatre into schools for more than 30 years. La Jolla Playhouse also offers the Adopt-A-School program which provides funding for POP Tour performances at schools that could not otherwise afford it. With the help of the theatre's Education Committee, Playhouse Board members Judy Smith and Barbara ZoBell created the Adopt-A-School program for those who love theatre and feel no child should be without its transformative power. For more information, contact Cristina Hernandez at chernandez@ljp.org.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Anthony Adu (Wes) is an actor from Accra, Ghana. He holds a B.A. in Theatre from University of Denver and has studied at the Chautauqua Theatre Company Conservatory. Select regional credits: *Tomorrow Will Be Sunday* (Chautauqua Theatre Company); *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival); *DragON*, *The Christians* (Denver Center Theatre Company); *Tartuffe*, *The Electric Baby* (Arvada Center); *Porgy and Bess* (Aurora Fox); *The Merchant of Venice* (LOCAL Theatre Lab). UC San Diego Credits: *Uncle Vanya*, *Heap*, *Everybody Black*, *The Jefferson Middle School Monthly* (WNPF '19), *Watch Me* (reading), *Incendiary* (reading), *Orestes 2.0*, *Elektra*. anthonyadu.com

Corneilus Franklin (New Kid/Stranger 1/Mother/Stacy) is an actor and cellist with an M.F.A from UC San Diego. The South Carolinian began his artistry as a cellist with an artist diploma from the SCGSAH and then later received a B.F.A. in Drama from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. UC San Diego credits: *Ironbound*, *Balm in Gilead*, *Incendiary* (staged reading) and *The Gradient* (WNPF '19), *Everybody Black*. Other select credits: *Measure for Measure* (Shakespeare Academy at Stratford), *No One Asked Me* (Soho Playhouse), *You Don't Matter* (NY Fringe Festival), *Secret Bonds* (NYU Experimental Theater Wing), *The NYU Reality Show* (Beacon Theater/Radio City Music Hall), *Sweeney Todd* (NYU New Studio on Broadway), *Spring Awakening* (NYU Tisch Mainstage). Regional: *Put Your House in Order* (ACD) at La Jolla Playhouse. corneilusfranklin.com

Rebecca Futterman (Yancy/Burger/TWFTPOTPWRA) was born and raised in the suburbs outside New York City and holds an MFA in Acting from UCSD and a BFA in Musical Theatre from Ithaca College. UC San Diego credits: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Heap*, *Ironbound*, *Man in Love*, *Monster* (WNPF '19), *The Misanthrope*. Regional credits: *Taking Steps*, *Children of Eden* (HSRT); *A Christmas Carol* (McCarter); *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Arts Center of Coastal Carolina). National Tour: *Seussical*.

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Savanna Padilla (Chavonne) is an actor and teaching artist originally from Humboldt County, CA. Theatre credits: *Shakespeare in Love*, *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles*, *Off the Rails* (u/s, Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *The Refugee Hotel* (Latinx Play Project); *The Madres*, *The Return of Tartuffe* (Ashland New Plays Festival); *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Oregon Fringe Festival); *Dream Hou\$e* (Latinx New Play Festival). SOU credits: *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *The Secret Garden*, *The Crucible*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Caliban's Dreams*, *Horse Girls*. UC San Diego credits: *Shame Spiral*, *Life is a Dream*, *Orestes 2.0*, *Elektra*, *HEAP*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. B.F.A. in Acting: Southern Oregon University, M.F.A. UC San Diego.

Cody Sloan (Bilal/Lorenz/Ritchie) is an actor and teacher. Originally from Pennsylvania, he graduated summa cum laude from Boston University and has studied at the American Conservatory Theater and the Stella Adler Studio of Acting. Select credits: *Trainers* (Diversionary Theatre), Boston premiere of *Men on Boats* (SpeakEasy Stage Company), *Nurse Play* (Exiled Theatre - IRNE Award Nomination, Best Actor), Mozart in *Amadeus* (Moonbox Productions), *Love! Valour! Compassion!* (Zeitgeist Stage), *The Extraordinary Fall of the Four-Legged Woman* (NY Fringe Festival). UC San Diego credits: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Orestes 2.0*, *Man in Love*, *Incendiary*, *Shame Spiral* (WNPF '19), *The Misanthrope*. Film: *Selah and the Spades* (Dir. Tayarisha Poe).

Emily Stout (Claire/Freud/Esme) is an actor and teacher from Steamboat Springs, CO. She graduated from Fordham University with a B.A. in Acting and a minor in Classical Languages. Regional: *A Christmas Carol*, *Dracula* and *Our Town* (Actors Theatre of Louisville); *Rules of Comedy* (Humana Festival) and *The Taming of the Shrew* (Interlochen Shakespeare Festival). UC San Diego: *Uncle Vanya*, *Heap*, *Orestes 2.0*, *Balm in Gilead*, *Monster* (WNPF '19), *The Misanthrope*.

Lee Vignes (Musk/Father/Corey/Stranger 2) is an actor and teacher. Originally from New Orleans, he attended Santa Fe University of Art and Design graduating with a BFA in Theatre. SFUAD credits: Warren Straub in *This Is Our Youth*, Sebastian in *Twelfth Night*, Sonny in *Grease*, Juliet in *Shakespeare's R&J*, Mr. Papillion in *Rhinoceros*, and the Emcee in *Cabaret*. UC San Diego credits: *Shame Spiral* (WNPF '19), *The Misanthrope*, *Elektra* and *Iron Bound*.

Idris Goodwin (Playwright) is a playwright, break-beat poet and director of The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College. His plays include *And in this Corner Cassius Clay*, *How We Got On*, *Hype Man* and *This Is Modern Art*. Goodwin serves on both the advisory boards of Theatre for Young Audiences USA and Children's Theatre Foundation Association. He is the co-host of *The Same Old New School Podcast* on Vocalo.

Jacole Kitchen (Director) is the Director of Arts Engagement and In-House Casting at La Jolla Playhouse, spearheading numerous community-based programs. In addition, she teaches acting, improv and professional development for actors through UCSD Extension. Directing credits include *Light Years Away* (Playhouse's 2019 POP Tour), *Cardboard Piano* (Diversionary Theatre), *An Iliad* (New Village Arts) and *September and Her Sisters* (Scripps Ranch Theatre – Ooal New Play Festival). Assistant directing credits include *Tiger Style!* and *Guards at the Taj* (La Jolla Playhouse), *HONKY*, *The Oldest Boy* and *Detroit* (San Diego Repertory Theatre). She was recently appointed the Executive Director of the San Diego Performing Arts League (SDPAL).

Jonathan Gilmer (Scenic Designer) is a San Diego-based director and designer. He recently designed *As One* (San Diego Opera), *The North Plan* (ION Theatre), *Shostakovich Day* (Barbican Centre), *Whistleblower* (Waterloo East Theatre) and was a member of the design team for the UK Student Exhibit at the 2015 Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space. Jonathan is also the Associate Technical Director at La Jolla Playhouse. He received his B.A. Honours in Technical Theatre Arts from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.

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Carmen Amon (Costume Designer) is a queer Chicana Costume Designer throughout the greater San Diego area. She graduated from SDSU in 2016 with a B.A. in Theater with an emphasis in Costume Design. She has worked on productions at the San Diego Rep, MOXIE, New Village Arts: Teatro Pueblo Nuevo, TuYo Theater Company, San Diego Junior Theatre, Moonlight Youth Theatre, Southwestern College, and Pacific Ridge School. She would very much like to thank all those that supported her throughout the ups and downs, te quiero mucho, gracias por siempre.

Lindsay Alayne Stevens (Lighting Designer) is proud to be working with La Jolla Playhouse on the POP Tour, *Pick Me Last*. A multidisciplinary artist, she holds an MFA in Theatre Design, Lighting from UC San Diego and 3 BFAs with High Honors in Writing, Theater and Photography from Marlboro College. Recent credits include: *All In The Timing* (Onstage Playhouse), *Man in Love* (UCSD), *You've Got Red on You* (Bootless Stageworks), *Calafia at Liberty* (La Jolla Playhouse 2019 WOW Festival), *Ready, Steady, Yeti, Go* (Azuka Theatre), and *The Johnny Shortcake Show* (The Kimmel Center). Website: lastevensdesign.com.

Evan Eason (Sound Designer) is thrilled to be returning to La Jolla Playhouse with *Pick Me Last*. Some of his previous sound design work include: *Emily Driver's Great Race Through Time and Space* (La Jolla Playhouse), *In Every Generation* (San Diego Repertory), *Project Fairytale* (New Village Arts), the 2018 Latinx New Play Festival (San Diego Repertory) and the 2019 Final Draft New Play Festival (New Village Arts.) Evan has also worked as an associate and/or assistant sound designer on the following productions: *The Humans* (San Diego Repertory), *Twelfth Night* (The Old Globe/USD MFA Program), *Aubergine* (San Diego Repertory), *Avenue Q* (New Village Arts.)

Madison Mae Williams (Dramaturg) is a multidisciplinary artist and scholar based in San Diego. Born and raised on Cape Cod, she received a B.A. concentrating in musical theatre, poetry, and Africana studies from Hampshire College. She is continuing her studies as a third year Theatre Ph.D. student at UC San Diego. Madison is passionate about theatre work that is accessible, radical, and increases visibility and representation for people of marginalized identities. She is a member of the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas and the Black Theatre Network. UC San Diego credits: *Elektra* (Music Director), *Man in Love* (Dramaturg), *Incendiary* (WNPF '19 staged reading), *Everybody Black* (Assistant/Music Director, Dramaturg). Other select credits: *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Director), *HAIR* (Associate Music Director), *Next to Normal* (Director/Music Director), *The 25th Annual...Bee* (Music Director), *An Iliad* (Director).

Kira Vine (First Assistant Director) is a freelance stage manager, thrilled to be joining her first POP Tour. Previously at the Playhouse: *The Luckiest*. Other credits include: *Ebenezer Scrooge's Big San Diego Christmas Show*; *Noura*; *Native Gardens* (The Old Globe); *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*; *Homos: Or, Everyone in America* (Diversions Theatre); *Actually*; *Aubergine* (San Diego REP); *La Cage Aux Folles* (Cygnet Theatre); *Agent 355* (Chautauqua Theatre Company); *Bliss: Or, Emily Post is Dead* (MOXIE Theatre); *Seven Spots on the Sun* (InnerMission Productions).

BluLight Films (Video Production and Direction) is a video production company specializing in producing top quality television shows, commercials, films, corporate projects and music videos. BluLight Films combines entertaining subject matter with cutting-edge filmmaking to deliver quality content. Collaborations with top tier brands include Airbnb, Amazon, Stone Brewery, Karl Strauss, Instant Imprints, ESRI, Bands: Tame Impala, Pond, and Haiku Hands. Based in California, BluLight Films has offices in Sherman Oaks, Los Angeles and San Diego. The company was founded in 2017 by partners Rah Davis, Sal Rivas, and Anthony Silva who bring over 20 years of collective experience in the film and entertainment industries.

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FACT SHEET

What: 2021 Performance Outreach Program (POP) Tour: *Pick Me Last*
World-Premiere Digital Production; La Jolla Playhouse Commission
By Idris Goodwin; Directed by Jacole Kitchen

When: Bookings for May – July available at pop-tour-lajollaplayhouse.com

Cast: Anthony Adu as *Wes*
Corneilus Franklin as *New Kid/Stranger 1/Mother/Stacy*
Rebecca Futterman as *Yancy/Burger/TWFTPOTPWRA*
Savanna Padilla as *Chavonne*
Cody Sloan as *Bilal/Lorenz/Ritchie*
Emily Stout as *Claire/Freud/Esme*
Lee Vignes as *Musk/Father/Corey/Stranger 2*

Creative: Scenic Designer: Jonathan Gilmer
Costume Designer: Carmen Amon
Sound Designer: Evan Eason
Lighting Designer: Lindsay Alayne Stevens
Dramaturg: Madison Mae Williams
First Assistant Director: Kira Vine
Video Production and Direction: BluLight Films

Booking: For information about booking the POP Tour, visit www.pop-tour-lajollaplayhouse.com.
For more information about the Adopt-A-School program, please contact Cristina Hernandez at chernandez@ljp.org.

Sponsors: La Jolla Playhouse is able to offer the POP Tour to the community at no cost to them due to the generous support we receive from both individuals and institutions whose donations cover the cost of all expenses. We are pleased to thank the following corporate, foundation and government entities for their sponsorship of *Pick Me Last*.

Corporate support provided by Bank of America, Cox Communications, The Morrison Foerster Foundation, Nordson, Professional Maintenance Systems, Qualcomm, ResMed Foundation, SDG&E, Silicon Valley Bank, Union Bank, US Bank and Viasat.

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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 plays and musicals, including mounting 105 world premieres, commissioning more than 60 new works, and sending 33 productions to Broadway – including the hit musical *Come From Away* – garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.