

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE'S *IS IT THURSDAY YET?* TO PREMIERE JULY 11 – AUGUST 6

BRAND NEW WORK FROM JENN FREEMAN AND SONYA TAYEH EXPLORES ACCLAIMED ARTIST'S LATE-IN-LIFE AUTISM DIAGNOSIS THROUGH DANCE, LIVE MUSIC AND VIDEO

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse's production of *Is It Thursday Yet?*, created, choreographed and performed by **Jenn Freeman**; created, choreographed and directed by Tony Award winner **Sonya Tayeh** (Playhouse's *Hundred Days*, Broadway's *Moulin Rouge*), composed and performed by **Holland Andrews**, will premiere **July 11 – August 6** (press opening: July 16) in the Mandell Weiss Forum. For tickets and information, please visit LaJollaPlayhouse.org.

The creative team features Tony Award winner **Rachel Hauck** (Playhouse's *The Garden*, *An Iliad*; Broadway's *Hadestown*), Scenic Designer; **Máirion Talán de la Rosa**, Costume Designer; **Cha See** (Playhouse's *As You Like It*), Lighting Designer; **Melanie Chen Cole** (Playhouse's *At the Old Place*, *#SuperShinySara*), Sound Designer; **Joseph DiGiovanna**, Media Designer; **Price McGuffey**, Drummer and Performer; **Jenna Hanlon**, Stage Manager, **Matthew Bantock**, Assistant Stage Manager.

Dancer and choreographer Jenn Freeman was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder in 2021 at age 33, and since then she has navigated an endless sea of epiphanies. Inspired by a deep curiosity to examine her childhood memories through this new lens, Jenn found a way to illuminate her story using the language she knows best: Dance. *Is It Thursday Yet?* invites you into the unique complexities of Jenn's neurodivergent brain through a stunning tapestry of dance, live music and home video footage. Original live music from renowned musician Holland Andrews is woven with audio narrations from Jenn's therapist, vocals, clarinet, drums and electronic music. This inventive, engrossing new work is co-created and directed by the electrifying choreographer Sonya Tayeh (Tony Award winner for *Moulin Rouge*).

"What a joy to welcome to the Playhouse Jenn Freeman and Sonya Tayeh, who together have crafted an exquisite piece that defies categorization," said **Christopher Ashley**, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse. *Is It Thursday Yet?* explores the evolution of an exceptional artist on the spectrum, and how her diagnosis helped create a path of self-discovery through a singular theatrical dance lens."

Jenn Freeman (she/they) is an autistic American choreographer, dance performer, and educator based in New York City. Freeman is an O'Donnell-Green Music and Dance foundation recipient, a 2022 New England Foundation for the Arts Recipient and the New York State Council on the Arts grant award recipient. In 2023, Freeman will be commissioned to make a new work for Complexions Contemporary Ballet. Most recently Freeman was commissioned to set a solo for American Ballet Theatre principal dancer, Cassandra Trenary, that premiered at Festival des arts de Saint-Sauveur in 2022. In 2021, Freeman created new work for the Martha Graham Dance Company. In 2018 Freeman produced, directed and choreographed her evening-length world premiere debut: ... *it's time...* at the Theater at The 14th St Y in New York City. After a sold-out run the show was re-commissioned for a second run in 2019. Freeman's choreography has been commissioned by Marymount Manhattan College, Wayne State University, BYU, and The University of Texas at Austin. For over a decade Jenn has worked as Sonya Tayeh's associate and resident choreographer in the development of pieces for: The Gibney Company, American Ballet Theater, The Martha Graham Dance Company, Guggenheim W&P, LA Ballet, The Juilliard School, and Cirque du Soleil. Freeman is a graduate of the Dance program at TISCH School of the Arts, NYU.

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Sonya Tayeh is a New York City-based Tony Award-winning choreographer and director. Since paving her professional career, her work has been characterized as a blend of powerful versatility and theatrical range. Selected credits include: *Moulin Rouge!* (Broadway, Worldwide, Dir. Alex Timbers), *The Sign in Sydney Brustein's Window* (Broadway Dir. Anne Kauffman), *Sing Street* (Huntington Theatre/ Dir. Rebecca Taichman), Martha Graham Dance Company (Joyce Theatre/ World Tour), American Ballet Theatre/*What Becomes of Love* Film, *Unveiling* with Moses Sumney and dancers (Fall For Dance/City Center), *Rent Live!* (Fox Network/Directed by Michael Greif and Alex Rudzinski), *The Lucky Ones* (Ars Nova/Dir. Anne Kauffman), *Face the Torrent* for Malpaso Dance Co. (commissioned by The Music Center/LA), *You'll Still Call Me By Name* (commissioned by New York Live Arts and Jacobs Pillow Dance Festival), *Hundred Days* (New York Theatre Workshop/Dir. Anne Kauffman), *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Theatre for a New Audience/Dir. Arin Arbus), Andrew Lippas' *The Wild Party* (City Center Encores!/Dir. Leigh Silverman), *Kung Fu* (Signature Theatre/Dir. Leigh Silverman). Tayeh has directed and choreographed for world renowned music artists, including Miley Cyrus (directed and choreographed The Gypsy Heart Tour), Florence and the Machine (choreographed performances for The Brit Awards, *The Voice* and *American Idol*), Kylie Minogue (Aphrodite Tour). She has gleaned many accolades for her versatile work, including a Tony Award, two Emmy Award nominations, Two Drama Desk Awards, an Obie Award and two Lucille Lortel Awards for "Outstanding Choreography." For more info visit sonyatayeh.com.

Holland Andrews is an American vocalist, composer, and performance artist whose work focuses on the abstraction of operatic and extended-technique voice to build soundscapes encompassing both catharsis and dissonance. Frequently highlighting themes surrounding vulnerability and healing, Andrews arranges music for voice, clarinet, and electronics. Andrews harnesses these instruments' innate qualities of power and elegance to serve as a cohesive vessel for these themes. As a vocalist, their influences stem from a dynamic range including contemporary opera, theater, and jazz, while also cultivating their own unique vocal style which integrates these influences with language disintegration and vocal distortion. Andrews previously performed solo music under the stage name Like a Villain. In addition to creating solo work, Andrews develops and performs soundscapes for dance, theater, and film, and their work is still toured nationally and internationally with artists such as Bill T. Jones, Dorothee Munyaneza, Will Rawls, and poet Demian Dinéyazhi. Notable musical collaborations have been with composers and artists such as Son Lux, Christina Vantzou, William Britelle, Peter Broderick, and is one of the first artist on releasing on the label Leiter, a Berlin-based record label spearheaded by composer, Nils Frahm. Holland Andrews is currently based in Brooklyn, New York. In addition to creating solo work, Andrews develops and performs the soundscapes for dance, theater, and film, and whose work is still toured nationally and internationally. Andrews has gained recognition from publications such as *The Wire*, *The New York Times*, *Uncut Magazine*, *BBC Radio*, and more. Holland Andrews is currently based in New York City.

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 108 world premieres, commissioning 60 new works, and sending 33 productions to Broadway – among them the hit musicals *Come From Away* and *Jersey Boys* – 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:** *Is It Thursday Yet?*
Created, choreographed and performed by Jenn Freeman
Created, choreographed and directed by Sonya Tayeh
Composed and performed by Holland Andrews
- WHEN:** **July 11 – August 6** (Press Opening: July 16 at 7pm)
Tue/Wed at 7:30pm; Thu/Fri/Sat at 8pm; Sun at 7pm; Sat/Sun at 2pm
- WHERE:** **Mandell Weiss Forum, La Jolla Playhouse**
2910 La Jolla Village Drive, La Jolla, CA 92037
- WHO:** Rachel Hauck, Scenic Design
Márió Talán de la Rosa, Costume Design
Cha See, Lighting Design
Melanie Chen Cole Sound Design
Joseph DiGiovanna, Media Design
Price McGuffey, Drummer/Performer
Jenna Hanlon, Stage Manager
Matthew Bantock, Assistant Stage Manager
- BACKGROUND:** Dancer and choreographer Jenn Freeman was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder in 2021 at age 33, and since then she has navigated an endless sea of epiphanies. Inspired by a deep curiosity to examine her childhood memories through this new lens, Jenn found a way to illuminate her story using the language she knows best: Dance. *Is It Thursday Yet?* invites you into the unique complexities of Jenn's neurodivergent brain through a stunning tapestry of dance, live music and home video footage. Original live music from renowned musician Holland Andrews is woven with audio narrations from Jenn's therapist, vocals, clarinet, drums and electronic music. This inventive, engrossing new work is co-created and directed by the electrifying choreographer Sonya Tayeh (Tony Award for *Moulin Rouge*).
- TICKETS:** [LaJollaPlayhouse.org](https://www.lajollaplayhouse.org); (858) 550-1010

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