

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM FOR SEASON OPENER: *THE BALLAD OF JOHNNY AND JUNE*

World-Premiere Musical Celebrates Legacy of Country Music Legends Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse announces the cast and creative team for its world-premiere musical, *The Ballad of Johnny and June*, book by **Robert Cary** (*SUMMER: The Donna Summer Musical*) and Playhouse Director Emeritus and two-time Tony Award winner **Des McAnuff** (*Jersey Boys*, *The Who's Tommy*), music and lyrics by **Johnny Cash**, **June Carter Cash** and others, directed by **Des McAnuff**. The production will run in the Mandell Weiss Theatre **May 28 – July 7**. For more information, please visit LaJollaPlayhouse.org.

The cast features **Christopher Ryan Grant** (Broadway's *Million Dollar Quartet*) as "Johnny Cash," **Van Hughes** (Broadway's *American Idiot*) as "John Carter Cash," and **Patti Murin** (Broadway's *Frozen*) as "June Carter Cash," along with **Maddie Shea Baldwin** as "Anita," **Paula Leggett Chase** as "Carrie," **Drew Wildman Foster** as "Carl Smith/Jack Cash/Marshall Grant," **Gabriella Joy** as "Vivian," **Bart Shatto** as "Ray Cash/Sam Phillips/W.S. Holland," and **Correy West** as "Luther Perkins/Rip Nix," and understudies **Summer Broyhill**, **Michael Louis Cusimano**, **Cody Ingram** and **Baily Day Sonner**.

The creative team includes **Ron Melrose**, Music Supervisor, Arranger and Orchestrator; **Lisa LeMay**, Music Director; **Byron Easley**, Choreographer; **Robert Brill**, Scenic Designer; **Sarafina Bush**, Costume Designer; **Amanda Zieve**, Lighting Designer; **Peter Fitzgerald**, Sound Designer; **Sean Nieuwenhuis**, Projection Designer; **Alberto "Albee" Alvarado**, Wig Designer; **Tara Rubin Casting/Spencer Gualdoni, CSA/Jacole Kitchen**, Casting; **Dean Remington**, Stage Manager; and **Vanessa Dodgson-Thomas** and **Marie Jahelka**, Assistant Stage Managers.

"It's always a delight to welcome Des back to the Playhouse – this time with this scintillating new bio-musical to launch our 2024/2025 season," said **Christopher Ashley**, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse. "Des is a master at bringing the lives of music icons to vivid life on stage, as evidenced by his productions of *Jersey Boys*, *SUMMER: The Donna Summer Musical*, among others, and he has assembled a dynamo cast and creative team to conjure and celebrate country music legends Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash."

Country music royalty Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash remain to this day one of the most famous couples of the 20th century. Created with the support of the family and told through the eyes of their son John Carter Cash, *The Ballad of Johnny and June* covers it all: their childhoods, their 1956 meeting at the Grand Ole Opry, the storied on-stage proposal in 1968, and the soaring highs and whiplash lows of fame, life on the road, addiction, arrests, controversies, marriage, family and devotion. This is a whole-hearted and clear-eyed telling of one of the most iconic love stories in music history, complete with a soundtrack of beloved hits, including *Walk the Line*, *Ring of Fire*, *I've Been Everywhere* and many more.

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Robert Cary is the co-writer of *Grease Live* (dir. Thomas Kail) and *A Christmas Story Live* for Fox Television, the co-author of the book for *SUMMER: The Donna Summer Musical* on Broadway, and contributed book revisions for the 2015 Broadway revival of *On The Town*. He is also the co-writer and co-lyricist of *Flashdance* (West End, US National Tour, international productions) and the lyricist and co-writer of *Palm Beach* (La Jolla Playhouse, Des McAnuff, dir). With partner Jonathan Tolins, he wrote *Get Happy: A Judy Garland Tribute* at Carnegie Hall. He is the director of the feature films *Ira and Abby* (Los Angeles Film Festival Audience Favorite Award), *Save Me* and *Anything But Love*.

Des McAnuff is a two-time Tony Award-winning director and served as La Jolla Playhouse's Artistic Director from 1983 through 1994, and from 2001 through April 2007 where he staged over 30 productions of classics, new plays and musicals. Under his leadership, the Playhouse garnered the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. He is also the former Artistic Director of Canada's Stratford Festival and co-founder of Broadway's Dodgers. Broadway: *Ain't Too Proud*, *Summer*, *Doctor Zhivago*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Guys and Dolls*, Aaron Sorkin's *The Farnsworth Invention*, *Jersey Boys* (Tony and Olivier Awards: Best Musical), Billy Crystal's *700 Sundays* (Tony Award: Best Special Theatrical Event), *Dracula the Musical*, *How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying*, *The Who's Tommy* (Tony and Olivier Awards: Best Director), *A Walk in the Woods*, *Big River* (Tony Awards: Best Director, Best Musical). Selected New York: *Fetch Clay, Make Man* (NYTW); multiple productions at The Public and BAM. Stratford highlights: *A Word or Two*, *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *The Tempest* (all with Christopher Plummer), *Twelfth Night* (with Brian Dennehy). Opera: *Faust* (The Met, ENO). TV: *700 Sundays* (HBO). Film: *Cousin Bette* (director, with Jessica Lange), *The Iron Giant* (producer, BAFTA Award) and *Quills* (executive producer). He has an honorary doctorate from Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University), and in 2012, he was awarded Canada's Governor Generals National Arts Center Award and the Order of Canada. His new version of *The Who's Tommy* recently opened on Broadway in March, 2024.

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 38 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

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FACT SHEET

WHAT: *The Ballad of Johnny and June*
Book by Robert Cary and Des McAnuff
Music and Lyrics by Johnny Cash, June Carter Cash and Others
Directed by Des McAnuff

WHEN: **May 28 – July 7, 2024**
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: Music Supervisor/Arranger/Orchestrator: Ron Melrose
Music Director: Lisa LeMay
Choreographer: Byron Easley
Scenic Designer: Robert Brill
Costume Designer: Sarafina Bush
Lighting Designer: Amanda Zieve
Sound Designer: Peter Fitzgerald
Projection Designer: Sean Nieuwenhuis
Wig Designer: Alberto “Albee” Alvarado
Casting: Tara Rubin Casting/Spencer Gualdoni, CSA/Jacole Kitchen
Stage Manager: Dean Remington
Assistant Stage Managers: Vanessa Dodgson-Thomas, Marie Jahelka

Cast:

Maddie Shea Baldwin	<i>Anita</i>
Paula Leggett Chase	<i>Carrie</i>
Drew Wildman Foster	<i>Carl Smith/Jack Cash/Marshall Grant</i>
Christopher Ryan Grant	<i>Johnny Cash</i>
Van Hughes	<i>John Carter Cash</i>
Patti Murin	<i>June Carter Cash</i>
Gabriella Joy	<i>Vivian</i>
Bart Shatto	<i>Ray Cash/Sam Phillips/W.S. Holland</i>
Correy West	<i>Luther Perkins/Rip Nix</i>

Understudies: Summer Broyhill, Michael Louis Cusimano
Cody Ingram, Baily Day Sonner

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BACKGROUND:

Country music royalty Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash remain to this day one of the most famous couples of the 20th century. Created with the support of the family and told through the eyes of their son John Carter Cash, this new musical covers it all: their childhoods, their 1956 meeting at the Grand Ole Opry, the storied on-stage proposal in 1968, and the soaring highs and whiplash lows of fame, life on the road, addiction, arrests, controversies, marriage, family and devotion. This is a whole-hearted and clear-eyed telling of one of the most iconic love stories in music history, complete with a soundtrack of such beloved hits as *I Walk the Line*, *Ring of Fire*, *I've Been Everywhere* and many more.

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

CONTACT: Becky Biegelsen: bbiegelsen@ljp.org

PHOTO CREDIT: The cast of La Jolla Playhouse's *The Ballad of Johnny and June* (l-r): Bart Shatto, Gabriella Joy, Van Hughes, Christopher Ryan Grant, Patti Murin, Maddie Shea Baldwin, Correy West, Paula Leggett Chase, Drew Wildman Foster; photo by Samantha Laurent

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