

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES JEANNA DE WAAL TO PORTRAY TITLE ROLE IN WORLD-PREMIERE MUSICAL *DIANA*

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse announces that **Jeanna de Waal** will portray the title role in its upcoming world-premiere musical *Diana*, by the Tony Award-winning *Memphis* team of **Joe DiPietro** (book and lyrics) and **David Bryan** (music and lyrics), directed by Playhouse Artistic Director and 2017 Tony Award winner **Christopher Ashley** and choreographed by Tony nominee **Kelly Devine**. The production will run **February 19 – March 31, 2019** in the Playhouse's Mandell Weiss Theatre. The complete cast and creative team will be announced at a later date.

"For this iconic role, we were looking for someone who could portray Princess Diana's incredible warmth and poise, along with her deep inner resolve to forge her own identity in the highly controlled environment of the royal family," said **Ashley**. "A rising star on Broadway, British actress Jeanna de Waal embodies all these traits and more, and we couldn't be more pleased to have her on board as we develop this extraordinary new musical at the Playhouse."

Jeanna de Waal originated the title role of Diana, Princess of Wales at The Powerhouse Theatre reading at Vassar College, directed by Christopher Ashley. On Broadway, **de Waal** starred as Lauren in *Kinky Boots* and as Heather in *American Idiot*. **de Waal** originated the role of Dawn in the A.R.T. production of *Waitress* by Sara Bareilles and the role of Mary Barrie in the A.R.T. production of *Finding Neverland*, both directed by Diane Paulus. Off Broadway, **de Waal** co-starred in the two-hander play, *Orwell in America*, at 59E59 Theatre and played Chris Hargensen in MCC Theatre's reimagined production of Broadway's *Carrie*. She is featured on the *Carrie* cast album released by Sh-K-Boom and Ghostlight Records. **de Waal** made her West End debut in the Queen musical *We Will Rock You*. Other notable credits include Glinda in the National Tour of *Wicked* and Janet in *The Rocky Horror Show* at The Old Globe. **de Waal** can be seen in the recurring role of Sophia in the Netflix/Marvel series "Iron Fist." She was also a guest star on "The Jim Gaffigan Show" for TV Land. **de Waal** wrote, produced, directed and starred in *Swept*, a short film which won The Audience Choice Award at The New Filmmakers Festival, NY. She is the founder of Broadway Weekends, the first theater camp for adults led by Broadway performers. **de Waal** trained at the Arts Educational School, Tring Park and has a B.A. (Hons) degree from the Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts.

About *Diana*

In 1981, an assistant kindergarten teacher married the Prince of Wales and, overnight, became the most famous woman in the world. But behind the fairytale, there was a troubled marriage and a young woman struggling to find her voice. Facing an entrenched monarchy and unprecedented media scrutiny, Princess Diana surprises everyone – including herself – as she grows into a global phenomenon and manages to change the world. Playhouse Artistic Director Christopher Ashley and the writers behind the Tony Award-winning musical *Memphis* create this highly-anticipated musical, featuring an epic and sweeping contemporary score.

– more –

About the Creative Team

David Bryan is a Tony Award-winning composer and lyricist. He won three 2010 Tony Awards for Best Score, Best Orchestrations and Best Musical for the hit Broadway musical *Memphis*, as well as the Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards for Best Musical. He is a Grammy® Award-winning keyboard player and founding member of Bon Jovi. Over the past 30 years the band has sold more than 150 million records and toured the world, playing to millions of people. Their recent *Because We Can* tour was the #1 grossing tour in the world. He and Joe DiPietro have also co-written the award-winning musical *The Toxic Avenger*. Mr. Bryan is also a National Spokesperson for VH1's Save The Music Program. For more information visit davidbryan.com.

Joe DiPietro is a Tony Award-winning playwright and lyricist. He won two Tony Awards for co-writing *Memphis*, which also received the 2010 Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards for Best Musical. He was nominated for a Tony Award and won a Drama Desk Award for *Nice Work If You Can Get It* starring Matthew Broderick. His other plays and musicals include *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (the longest-running musical revue in Off-Broadway history), *The Toxic Avenger* and *The Thing About Men* (both winners of the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Off-Broadway Musical), the much-produced comedy *Over the River and Through the Woods*, *The Art of Murder* (Edgar Award winner for Best Mystery Play) and the Broadway musical *All Shook Up*. In 2016, his play *Hollywood* had its world premiere at La Jolla Playhouse, and *Clever Little Lies*, starring Marlo Thomas, debuted at George Street Playhouse. His work has received thousands of productions across the country and around the world.

Christopher Ashley has served as La Jolla Playhouse's Artistic Director since October, 2007.

During his tenure, he has helmed the Playhouse's productions of *The Squirrels*, *Hollywood*, *The Darrell Hammond Project*, *Chasing the Song*, *His Girl Friday*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *A Dram of Drummhicit*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Restoration*, as well as the musicals *Escape to Margaritaville*, *Xanadu*, *Memphis*, which won four 2010 Tony Awards including Best Musical, and *Come From Away*, for which he won the 2017 Tony Award for Best Director of a Musical. He also spearheaded the Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) series, the DNA New Work Series and the Resident Theatre program. Prior to joining the Playhouse, he directed the Broadway productions of *Xanadu* (Drama Desk nomination), *All Shook Up* and *The Rocky Horror Show* (Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Award nominations), as well as the Kennedy Center Sondheim Celebration productions of *Sweeney Todd* and *Merrily We Roll Along*. Other New York credits include: *Blown Sideways Through Life*, *Jeffrey* (Lucille Lortel and Obie Awards), *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told*, *Valhalla*, *Regrets Only*, *Communicating Doors*, *Wonder of the World*, *Bunny Bunny*, *The Night Hank Williams Died* and *Fires in the Mirror* (Lucille Lortel Award), among others. Mr. Ashley also directed the feature films *Jeffrey* and *Lucky Stiff*, as well as the American Playhouse production of *Blown Sideways Through Life* for PBS. Mr. Ashley is the recipient of the Princess Grace Award, the Drama League Director Fellowship and an NEA/TCG Director Fellowship.

Kelly Devine's Playhouse credits include *Escape to Margaritaville*, *Come From Away*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *Zhivago* and *Private Fittings*. Her Broadway credits include *Come From Away* (Tony Award nomination), *Escape to Margaritaville*, *Doctor Zhivago*, *Rocky* (Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Award nominations) and *Rock of Ages*. International: *Rocky* (Germany), *Rock of Ages* (West End, UK tour, Toronto, Australia; Helpmann & Green Room Awards). Opera: *Faust* (The Met & ENO), *Wozzeck* (San Diego Opera). Off-Broadway: *Rock of Ages*, *Fat Camp*, *Frankenstein*, *Anne Wrecksick*. Regional: *Come From Away*, *Toxic Avenger*, *A Christmas Story*, *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*. Stratford Shakespeare Festival: *Cabaret*, *Romeo and Juliet*. Select film and television credits include: *Mozart in the Jungle*, *Wormwood* and *Untouchables* starring Nicole Kidman and Bryan Cranston.

-- more --

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 2017 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 95 world premieres, commissioning 50 new works, and sending 32 productions to Broadway, among them the currently-running hit musicals *Come From Away* and *SUMMER: The Donna Summer Musical* – garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, including the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

#