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Pasadena Playhouse takes on one of its most ambitious productions yet

Ragtime: The Musical

Book by Terrence McNally

Music by Stephen Flaherty

Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens

Based on the novel *Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow

Directed by David Lee

Choreographed by Mark Esposito

Musical Direction by Darryl Archibald

Now through March 3

PASADENA, CA (February 10, 2019) – Pasadena Playhouse, the State Theater of California, has transformed the historic theater with an all new version of ***Ragtime: The Musical*** as it returns to Los Angeles more than two decades after its premiere at the Shubert Theatre. With 21 actors and a 16-piece orchestra, this is one of the most ambitious productions in the Playhouse’s recent history.

Based on the novel *Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow, ***Ragtime: The Musical*** is written by Terrence McNally, and composed by Stephen Flaherty with lyrics by Lynn Ahrens. This production is directed by David Lee with choreography by Mark Esposito and musical direction by Darryl Archibald.

The cast of ***Ragtime: The Musical*** is led by Clifton Duncan (Broadway’s *The Play That Goes Wrong*, Off-Broadway’s *Carmen Jones*) as Coalhouse and Shannon Warne (Guinevere in *Camelot* at Pasadena Playhouse, directed by David Lee; Baz Luhrmann’s *La Boheme* at the Ahmanson Theatre, Ovation recipient) as Mother. The production also stars Bryce Charles (*The Book of Mormon* national tour, *Blues in the Night* at Wallis Annenberg Center) as Sarah and Marc Ginsburg (Ovation nominee: Che in *Evita* at Cabrillo Music Theatre’s, and Aaron in *First Date* at La Mirada/McCoy Rigby Entertainment’s) as Tateh.

The production features Zachary Ford (*Camelot* at Pasadena Playhouse, *Spamalot* at Wynn Casino) as Father, Katharine McDonough (*Mary Poppins* and *My Fair Lady* at Musical Theatre West) as Evelyn Nesbit, Iara Nemirovsky (First National Tour of *School of Rock*) as Little Girl, Valerie Perri (Broadway National Tours of *Evita*, *Jerome Robbins’ Broadway*, Off-Broadway’s *Diamonds*) as Emma Goldman, Dylan Saunders (*King Charles III* at Pasadena Playhouse, AMC’s

“Turn: Washington Spies”) as Younger Brother, Benjamin Schrader (Broadway’s *The Book of Mormon*, *Ragtime*, *Avenue Q*) as Harry Houdini, and Luké Barbato Smith (Debbie Allen’s *Freeze Frame...Stop the Madness* at The Wallis Annenberg and The Kennedy Center) as Little Boy.

The cast is rounded out by Dedrick Bonner as Booker T. Washington, Michael Deni as Male Ensemble, Ryan Dietz as Henry Ford, Cornelius Jones Jr. as Coalhouse’s Friend, Gregory North as Grandfather, Tom G. McMahon as J.P. Morgan, Molly Stilliens as Female Ensemble, Michael Thomas-Visgar as Willie Conklin, and Candace J. Washington as Sarah’s Friend.

The design team features scenic design by Tom Buderwitz; costume design by Kate Bergh; lighting design by Jared A. Sayeg; sound design by Philip G. Allen; projection design by Hana Sooyeon Kim, and wig and hair design by Carol Doran.

Tickets for ***Ragtime: The Musical*** start at \$25 and are available at pasadenaplayhouse.org, by phone at 626-356-7529, and at the box office at 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101.

ABOUT RAGTIME: THE MUSICAL

The original Broadway production opened on January 18, 1998, as the Los Angeles Shubert Theatre was hosting the long-running United States premiere company. Critic David Horluchi said, “Tragic, touching, and ultimately triumphant, *Ragtime* is an American classic.”

Nominated for 13 Tony Awards including Best Musical, ***Ragtime: The Musical*** tells the story of three families at the turn of the 20th Century in pursuit of the American dream. The award-winning score uses ragtime rhythms to paint a portrait of the people who built this country with the hopes for a brighter tomorrow.

E.L. Doctorow’s famous and popular novel became the basis of one of the most revered musicals of the modern age. ***Ragtime: The Musical*** begins with an unforgettable sweeping, nine-minute opening number in which all strata of society of the early twentieth century are introduced: immigrant Jews in their ghetto, successful rich Protestants, and African Americans.

The fictional characters – pianist Coalhouse Walker Jr., his child’s mother Sarah – who has become part of a respected family headed by the white Father and Mother – and a Latvian immigrant Tateh, are eventually joined by a parade of historic figures -- Evelyn Nesbit, Booker T. Washington, J. P. Morgan, Henry Ford, Stanford White, Admiral Peary, Matthew Henson, Emma Goldman and even Harry Houdini – in this much appreciated and well-remembered musical.

Director David Lee said, “The themes of the show are more relevant than ever. Set in the first years of the 20th Century, it deals with immigration, racism, white privilege, women’s’ rights, workers’ rights, violence in the name of justice, media’s outsize influence on our democracy, inter-sectional politics and even the clash between fact and fiction in reporting our history.

It was written in the last years of the 20th century to remind us that those elements of the earlier American experiment were still being wrestled with, and offer some clarity and hope of survival for our country and its promise.

And now, 20 years later, we are dealing with the same themes. I'm passionate about the piece, not only because I believe it is masterful, but because I don't feel I'm alone in needing clarity and a whiff of hope."

IN CONVERSATION: RACE, IDENTITY AND RAGTIME

To further explore the themes at the core of *Ragtime* and to look at the real American experience in the 100+ years following the musical, *In Conversation: Race, Identity, and Ragtime* will be presented on February 11 at 7:00pm. This talk is free to the public.

Entitled *Till We Reach That Day: The Struggle for Justice in America* will be held at Pasadena Playhouse on February 11 at 7:00pm and will explore the journey of Black Americans from slavery through today, and the countless movements, efforts, struggles and successes that have shaped the American experience. Panelists will include Tyree A. Boyd-Pates, History Curator and Program Manager at California African-American Museum and Funmilola Fagbamila, adjunct professor of Pan African Studies at California State University, Los Angeles.

ABOUT THE PASADENA PLAYHOUSE

The Pasadena Playhouse is a place where people have gathered for 100 years to experience bold and important theater. It is one of the most prolific theaters in American history with a legacy of profound theatrical impact and courageous new work. In 1937, the Playhouse was officially recognized as the State Theater of California for its contribution and commitment to the dramatic arts. Today it continues that tradition of excellence under the helm of producing artistic director Danny Feldman. Dedicated to enriching lives through theater, community programs and learning initiatives, Pasadena Playhouse is a living force in the community.

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Calendar Listing for *Ragtime: The Musical*

Written by Terrence McNally

Composed by Stephen Flaherty with Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens

Based on the novel *Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow

Directed by David Lee

Venue: The Pasadena Playhouse, 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101

Dates: Now through Sunday, March 3

Performance Schedule:

Tuesday-Friday evenings at 8:00 p.m.

Saturday at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.; Sunday at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

No performance on Sunday, 2/24 at 7 p.m.

Tickets: Prices start at \$25

Online -- PasadenaPlayhouse.org

By phone at 626-356-7529

In person -- Pasadena Playhouse Box Office, located at 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101

Special ***In Conversation: Race, Identity & Ragtime***

Events: Monday, February 11 at 7:00pm.

Till We Reach That Day: The Struggle for Justice in America will be held at Pasadena Playhouse on February 11 at 7:00PM and will explore the journey of Black Americans from slavery through today, and the countless movements, efforts, struggles and successes that have shaped the American experience. Panelists will include Tyree A. Boyd-Pates, History Curator and Program Manager at California African-American Museum and Funmilola Fagbamila, adjunct professor of Pan African Studies at California State University, Los Angeles.

Information: For more information on all productions at Pasadena Playhouse visit PasadenaPlayhouse.org.

Description: The great American musical has returned to LA for its first major production in 20 years. Nominated for 13 Tony Awards including Best Musical, *Ragtime* tells the story of three families at the turn of the 20th Century in pursuit of the American dream. The award-winning score uses ragtime rhythms to paint a portrait of the people who built this country with the hopes for a brighter tomorrow.

BIOGRAPHIES

Clifton Duncan (Coalhouse) Clifton is elated to return to Southern California after starring in *The Scottsboro Boys* and *Macbeth* at The Old Globe. Broadway: *The Play that Goes Wrong*. Off-Broadway: *Carmen Jones* (dir. John Doyle; Classic Stage Company), *Assassins* and *Hey, Look Me Over!* (City Center Encores!), *The Good Person of Szechwan* (The Public Theatre), *Kung-Fu* (Signature Theatre). Regional highlights include Arena Stage, Yale Repertory Theatre, The Shakespeare Theatre Company, American Conservatory Theatre, and Williamstown Theatre Festival. TV: "The Onion," "Sports Dome" (Comedy Central), "Elementary" (CBS), "Flesh & Bone" (Starz), "Proven Innocent" (Fox, upcoming). Training: New York University Graduate Acting Program.

Shannon Warne (Mother) Shannon is thrilled to be returning to Pasadena Playhouse, having starred as Guenevere in David Lee's 2010 production of *Camelot*. Recent: Mrs. Potts in *Beauty and the Beast* (Sacramento Music Circus), Winifred Banks in *Mary Poppins* (Music Circus and McCoy-Rigby Entertainment), Amy in *Having It All* (Ovation Nominee, Lead Actress), *My Fair Lady* starring Jonathan Price and Cloris Leachman (Granada Theatre), Maria in *The Sound of Music* (Cabrillo Music Theatre), Grace in *Annie* (Musical Theatre West). Awards: Ovation recipient for Baz Luhrmann's *La Boheme* (Ahmanson). Member of AEA and MTG.

Bryce Charles (Sarah) Bryce is ecstatic to be making her Pasadena Playhouse debut with *Ragtime!* She earned her BFA in Musical Theatre from AMDA College and Conservatory. Regional Theater: *Blues in the Night* (dir. Sheldon Epps; The Wallis Annenberg). National Tour: *The Book of Mormon* (2nd National). TV: "Encore," "Blackish" (ABC); "Fuller House," "Tales of the City" (Netflix); "Teachers" (TV Land).

Marc Ginsburg (Tateh) Marc is thrilled to be playing this bucket list role in this amazing production at the legendary Pasadena Playhouse! Southern California theater: *Evita* (Che; Ovation Nomination), *First Date* (Aaron; Ovation Nomination), *Shrek* (Lord Farquaad; San Diego Critics Nomination), *Beauty and the Beast* (Lumiere), *Man of La Mancha* (Quixote/Cervantes), *The Producers* (Leo Bloom), *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (Chauvelin), *Spamalot* (Sir Lancelot and others), and more. Film: "Racing Colt" (Amazon Prime).

Zachary Ford (Father) Theatre credits include *Camelot* (Pasadena Playhouse), *Dear World* starring Tyne Daly (Valley Performing Arts Center), *Spamalot* (Wynn Casino), *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Oklahoma*, and *Parade* (3D Theatricals), *End of the Rainbow* (McCoy/Rigby Entertainment & Laguna Playhouse), *Young Frankenstein*, *Big Fish* (Musical Theatre West), LA Philharmonic, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre. Cast Recordings: Stephen Flaherty's *Loving Repeating*, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra's *West Side Story*. LA workshops: *Heathers*, *Empire Burlesque*. TV: "Young and the Restless" (CBS), "Liv & Maddie" (Disney). Zachary's a Roosevelt University grad, Studio School professor, Musical Theatre Guild member, and AMT Artists client.

Katharine McDonough (Evelyn Nesbit) Katharine is thrilled to be making her Pasadena Playhouse debut! Southern California: *Mary Poppins* and *My Fair Lady* (Musical Theatre West), *Frozen* (Hyperion Theatre), *Newsies* (Moonlight Productions), *The Music Man* (Norris Theatre), *EMPIRE* (La Mirada Theatre, Dir. Marcia Milgrom-Dodge). Katharine is also the Artistic Director of Contempo Productions, a Los Angeles non-profit theatre company. Recent directing credits include *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (Hollywood Fringe Festival and Chromolume Theatre).

Iara Nemirovsky (Little Girl) Iara is excited to help bring *Ragtime* to life at Pasadena Playhouse. Iara made her professional debut as Summer, rocking out across the country in the First National Tour of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *School of Rock*. She is a proud member of the Los Angeles Drama Club, the nation's youngest Shakespeare troupe, where she has appeared as Puck, Ariel, Hecate, Lavinia.

Valerie Perri (Emma Goldman) Broadway Nationals: *Evita*, *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*. Off-Broadway: *Diamonds* (Circle in the Square), *Angry Housewives* (Minetta Lane), *On the Swing Shift* (Manhattan Theater Club). Southern California: *The World Goes 'Round* (Reprise 2.0), *The Graduate* (Laguna Playhouse), *Hello Dolly* (3D Theatricals), *Sunset Boulevard* (Musical Theater West, Moonlight Amphitheater), *Closer than Ever*, *The Sweepers* (International City Theater). TV: "Criminal Minds" (CBS), "ER" and "Another World" (NBC), "Who's the Boss" (ABC). Film: "Grease," "The Out of Towners," and "Dickie Roberts" (Paramount), "George of the Jungle" (Disney). Recording: *Valerie Perri: Sweet Conversation*.

Dylan Saunders (Younger Brother) Dylan returns to Pasadena Playhouse after last season's *King Charles III*. TV: "Turn: Washington's Spies" (AMC, recurring), "American Koko" (ABC, executive produced by Viola Davis), "Chicago Fire" (NBC), and "Kevin From Work" (ABC Family). Theater: Mark Taper Forum, Boston Court, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Theatre Apostrof (Prague, CZ) and the National Theatre of London (Connections Festival). Voiceover: Disney, Nickelodeon, Fox, and video games. Founding

Member: StarKid Productions (235 million YouTube views, multiple Billboard-charting original cast recordings). BFA: University of Michigan.

Benjamin Schrader (Harry Houdini) Broadway: The original cast of *The Book of Mormon* (Eugene O'Neill Theater), *Ragtime* (Neil Simon Theater), *Avenue Q* (Golden Theatre). Broadway 1st National Tours: *Peter and the Starcatcher* (dir. Roger Rees), *Avenue Q*, *Big River*. TV/Film: "True Detective" (HBO), "Frozen" (Walt Disney Animation), "Revenge" (ABC), "Coop and Cami" (Disney Channel). Benjamin Schrader is a headlining magician at the world famous Magic Castle in Hollywood and is a freelance magic consultant for Walt Disney Imagineering. He is the founder/host of the Magic|Bar speakeasy in Encino, CA.

Luké Barbato Smith (Little Boy) Luké is thrilled to make his Pasadena Playhouse debut. He most recently appeared in the National Broadway tour of *Fun Home*. Luké appeared at the Wallis Annenberg and the Kennedy Center in Debbie Allen's *Freeze Frame... Stop the Madness*. Film: "Smallfoot." Television: "The Goldbergs," "Tyrant" and "Grey's Anatomy." Commercials: Ford GT, Wendy's, Direct TV, Disney and more. Luke voiced Oscar in "Summer Camp Island" (Cartoon Network).

David Lee (Director) David Lee is a nine-time Emmy Award winner who co-created, wrote and directed NBC's *Frasier*. Previously at The Pasadena Playhouse, Lee directed acclaimed productions of *Light Up the Sky*, *Do I Hear A Waltz?*, *110 in the Shade*, *Diva*, *Can-Can*, *Camelot*, *Casa Valentina*, and *Art*.

Mark Esposito (Choreographer) Mark has choreographed for theater, television, commercials and music videos: Pasadena Playhouse (*Camelot* and *Casa Valentina*), Hollywood Bowl, LA Reprise Series, La Mirada Theater, Musical Theater West, Sacramento Music Circus, Coachella Valley Repertory Theatre, Universal Studios, Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera, Music Theater of Wichita, North Shore Music Theater, Bass Hall and Casa Manana, Ogunquit Playhouse, Two River Theater, Globus Theater Company (Russia), York and Signature Theater Companies (New York City). Associate Director and Choreographer for *The Radio City Music Hall Christmas Show* and *Yuletide Celebration* with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. Mark has performed in over 16 Broadway and National Tours. Former faculty at University of Michigan.

Darryl Archibald (Musical Director) *The Color Purple* (2015 revival tour), *Motown The Musical* (Broadway 2016 and national tour), *Wicked* at the Pantages Theater (substitute conductor), *Memphis* (Broadway tour), *Disney's The Lion King* (Broadway tour – vocal coach/assistant conductor), *Dear World* with Tyne Daly (VPAC), *Jonathan Dove's Innocence* (Banff Centre and Manhattan Theatre Club), *Two By Two* with Jason Alexander, *How To Succeed...* with John O'Hurley, *The Fantasticks* with Eric McCormack, *Once On This Island* with Ledisi, *Li'l Abner* with Cathy Rigby and Fred Willard (Reprise), *Great Expectations*, *My Fair Lady*, *1776*, *Camelot*, and *Forever Plaid* (Utah Shakespearean Festival), *The Wiz* (The Mundy), "A Hollywood Holiday Celebration" (ABC), *The Fountain Show* and *Christmas Trolley Show* (The Grove Los Angeles).

Terrence McNally (Playwright) Playwright Terrence McNally grew up listening to radio broadcasts of The Green Hornet and the Metropolitan Opera. McNally's love of the opera and especially of the famous diva Maria Callas would surface in his work, most notably in his Tony award-winning *Master Class* (1996). His love of music also inspired him to collaborate on several musicals, including *The Rink* (1984), *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1993), and *Ragtime* (1996). From the macabre to the farcical, the range of McNally's satire and drama borrows from his personal life and his personal understanding of the world. McNally's plays about homophobia, love, fear, and AIDS, among other things, illuminate the dominant theme of how people connect and fail to connect. In addition to four Tony Awards, McNally has received two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Rockefeller Grant, the Lucille Lortel Award, the Hull-Warriner Award, and a citation from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Lynn Ahrens (Lyricist) and **Stephen Flaherty** (Composer) Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty are represented on Broadway with two hit shows—the revival of *Once On This Island*, and their stage adaptation of *Anastasia*. They won the Tony Award, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards and received two Grammy nominations for their score of the Broadway musical *Ragtime*. For the songs and score of Twentieth Century Fox's animated feature film *Anastasia*, they garnered two Academy Award nominations and two Golden Globe nominations. *Once On This Island* received eight Tony Nominations, the London Olivier Award for Best Musical, and the 2018 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical. They are recipients of the 2014 Oscar Hammerstein Award for Lifetime Achievement, and in 2015 were inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame. Other mutual theatre credits include *Seussical* (Grammy nomination, now one of the most frequently-performed shows in America); *My Favorite Year*; *A Man of No Importance* (Best Musical, 2003 Outer Critics Circle Award); *Chita Rivera: The Dancer's Life*; *Dessa Rose*; *Lucky Stiff*; *The Glorious Ones: Rocky and Little Dancer* (2014 world premiere, Kennedy Center). They are Council members of the Dramatists Guild of America, and co-founders of the Dramatists Guild Fellows Program for Emerging Writers. They have been collaborators for more than thirty years.