

# Head Over Heels

## Cast Announcement



Queen Gynecia  
**ALASKA 5000**  
(*RuPaul's Drag Race*)



King Basilius  
**LEA DELARIA**  
(*Orange is the New Black*)



The Player  
**YUREL ECHEZARRETA**  
(*Steven Spielberg's West Side Story*)



Pamela  
**TIFFANY MANN**  
(*Be More Chill*)



Musidorus  
**GEORGE SALAZAR**  
(*Little Shop of Horrors*)



Mopsa  
**EMILY SKEGGS**  
(*Fun Home*)



Philoclea  
**SHANICE WILLIAMS**  
(*"Dorothy" in NBC's The Wiz Live!*)

**TICKETS NOW ON SALE**  
at [pasadenaplayhouse.org](https://pasadenaplayhouse.org)

**Tuesday, November 9 to Sunday, December 12**  
**Opening Weekend: November 13 & 14, 2021**

PASADENA, CA (September 23, 2021) – Pasadena Playhouse, the State Theater of California, announces initial casting – **Alaska 5000** (*RuPaul's Drag Race*), **Lea DeLaria** (*Orange is the New Black*), **Yurel Echezarreta** (*Steven Spielberg's West Side Story*), **Tiffany Mann** (*Be More Chill*), **George Salazar** (*Little Shop of Horrors*), **Emily Skeggs** (*Fun Home*), and **Shanice Williams** ("Dorothy" in NBC's *The Wiz Live!*) – for *Head Over Heels*, with music of **The Go-Go's**, which kicks off the Playhouse's 2021-2022 season. The historic Pasadena Playhouse will be fully

transformed for the production creating an experience with both traditional reserved theater seats and a general admission dance floor. Performances are scheduled from November 9 through December 12; the press opening weekend is November 13 and 14. Tickets are on sale now, starting at \$30, at [pasadenaplayhouse.org](http://pasadenaplayhouse.org).

### Cast Overview:

- **Alaska 5000** (Queen Gynecia) is the winner of the second season of *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars* and runner-up on the fifth season of *RuPaul's Drag Race*.
- **Lea DeLaria** (King Basilius) has had a multi-faceted career as a comedian, actress, and jazz musician, spanning decades, including her three-time SAG Award-winning role as “Carrie ‘Big Boo’ Black” in *Orange is the New Black*.
- **Yurel Echezarreta** (The Player) was in the Broadway production of *Head Over Heels*, as well as *Moulin Rouge!*, *Aladdin*, *Matilda*, and *La Cage aux Folles*, and Steven Spielberg’s *West Side Story*.
- **Tiffany Mann** (Pamela) appeared on Broadway in *Be More Chill* and is a Lucille Lortel Award winner for *Jerry Springer the Opera*.
- **George Salazar** (Musidorus) was last seen as “Seymour Krelborn” at Pasadena Playhouse in *Little Shop of Horrors* and starred as “Michael” in the Broadway production of *Be More Chill* (Lucille Lortel winner and Drama Desk Nominee for Outstanding Featured Actor in a Musical).
- **Emily Skeggs** (Mopsa) was nominated for both a Tony and Grammy Award for her work in the Broadway award-winning production of *Fun Home*.
- **Shanice Williams** (Philoclea) is best known for her portrayal of “Dorothy” on NBC’s *The Wiz Live!*

*The remaining role of “The Oracle” will round out the cast of eight and will be announced at a later date.*

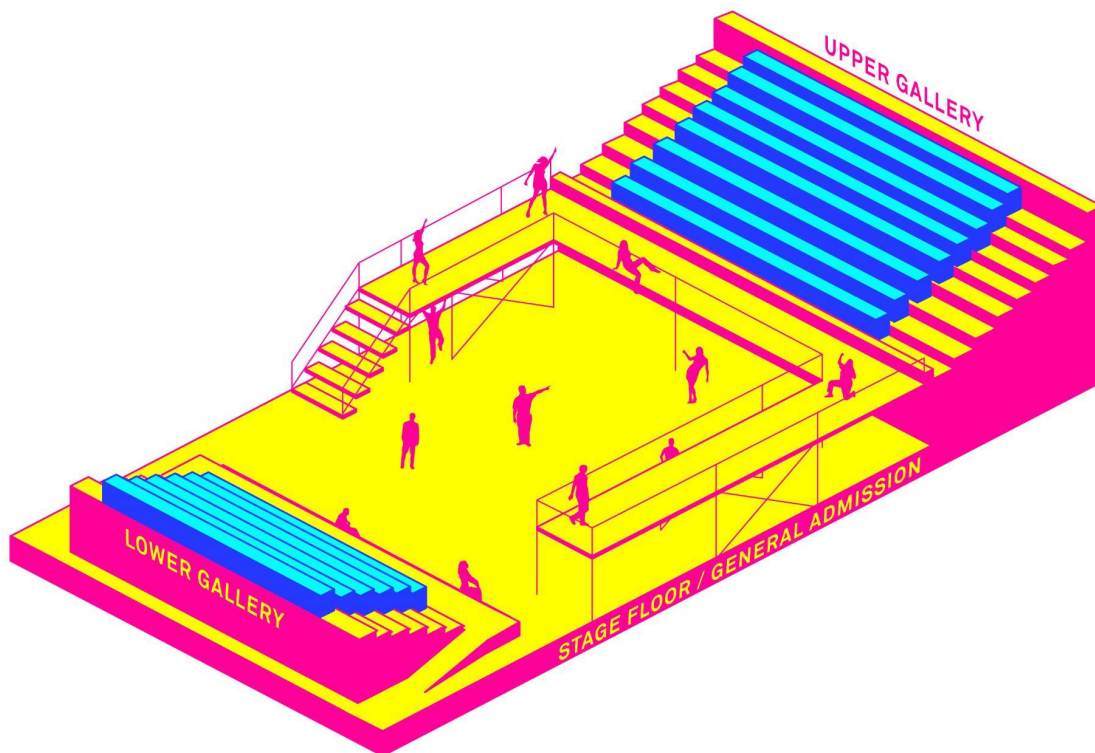
In addition, Pasadena Playhouse announces the full creative team. The production is being directed, choreographed, and conceived by Jenny Koons and Sam Pinkleton and features music direction by Kris Kukul, scenic design by David Meyer; costume design by Hahnji Jang; lighting design by Stacey Derosier; sound design by Danny Erdberg and Ursula Kwong Brown; casting by Ryan Tymensky of The Telsey Office, and stage management by Sara Sahin. ***Head Over Heels***, with songs by The Go-Go’s, is based on *The Arcadia* by Sir Philip Sidney, conceived by and features an original book by Jeff Whitty, and adapted by James Magruder.

### About the Show and Design Concept

***Head Over Heels*** is a musical comedy, set to the music of the iconic LA-based female rock band **The Go-Go’s**, that follows a royal family in search of a purpose, lovers in search of each other, and a whole kingdom in search of a beat. Featuring the hit songs *Our Lips Are Sealed*, *Vacation*, Belinda Carlisle’s *Heaven is a Place on Earth*, and *Mad About You*, among others, the audience will be whisked away through a world of

exuberance and wit from the first notes of *We Got the Beat* to the final celebratory curtain call.

***Head Over Heels*** has been reimagined for the Playhouse by Director/Choreographer Jenny Koons and Director/Choreographer Sam Pinkleton in an all new experiential production. Originally produced for a traditional proscenium stage on Broadway in 2018, the Playhouse's 90-minute, intermission-free production puts the audience in the middle of a non-stop, dance-filled joyride through magic, merriment, and mischief. With the actors performing all over the converted theater, every seat, or spot on the dance floor, will have a unique vantage point and an experience to remember. Patrons will be required to be fully vaccinated and wear masks when entering the theater.



Whether you prefer to watch this play as a traditional theatrical experience or to be in the middle of all the action, the Playhouse will ensure that you will have a good time. **Danny Feldman**, Pasadena Playhouse Producing Artistic Director said, "We return to the stage with a party for all. There's been nothing like it in our 100+ year history. Our historic theater will be turned on its head as the audience joins in on the exuberant celebration. This is a live musical experience created just for this moment, this theater, and this community."

Tickets for ***Head Over Heels*** start at \$30 and are available at [pasadenaplayhouse.org](https://pasadenaplayhouse.org), by phone at 626-356-7529, and at the Box Office at 39 S. El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101.

## COVID-19 AND PATRON SAFETY GUIDELINES

Pasadena Playhouse's HVAC system is in the process of a complete overhaul and modernization. The new air filtration and ventilation system along with other strict COVID-19 safety protocols will ensure a safe return to the theater for *Head Over Heels*.

Pasadena Playhouse will follow all safety protocols put forth by Los Angeles County and the City of Pasadena. At this time, the following safety plan will be in place upon our return to stage:

- All patrons will be required to wear a mask fully covering their nose and mouth at all times while in the theater.
- Ticket holders will be required to be fully vaccinated and will need to provide a photo ID and proof of vaccination (physical vaccination card, a picture of vaccination card, or a digital vaccination record). Guests under 12 will not be admitted.
- Guests who need a reasonable accommodation for medical reasons or due to a sincerely held religious belief must provide proof of a negative COVID-19 PCR test taken within 72 hours prior to entering the theater.

Pasadena Playhouse will continue to address these guidelines as we approach performances. The most up-to-date requirements can be found at [pasadenaplayhouse.org/covid-19/](https://pasadenaplayhouse.org/covid-19/).

## 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.

### **Calendar Listing for *Head Over Heels***

Songs by The Go-Go's

Based on *The Arcadia* by Sir Philip Sidney

Conceived and Original Book by Jeff Whitty

Adapted by James Magruder

Production Directed, Choreographed, and Conceived  
by Jenny Koons and Sam Pinkleton

Venue: Pasadena Playhouse, 39 S. El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101

Dates: Tuesday, November 9 to Sunday, December 12  
Press Opening Weekend, November 13 and 14

Performance Schedule:

Tuesday-Friday evenings at 8 PM

Saturday at 2 PM and 8 PM; Sunday at 2 PM and 7 PM

Tickets: Prices start at \$30

Online -- [pasadenaplayhouse.org](http://pasadenaplayhouse.org)

By phone at 626-356-7529

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

Information: For more information on all productions at Pasadena Playhouse visit [pasadenaplayhouse.org](http://pasadenaplayhouse.org).

Description: The Pasadena Playhouse will be turned upside down for this one-of-a-kind musical experience.

The music of The Go-Go's fuels this non-stop, dance-filled joyride through magic, merriment, and mischief. From the first notes of *We Got the Beat* to the final rapturous curtain call, you'll be whisked away through a world of exuberance and wit. This jubilant celebration follows a royal family in search of a purpose, lovers in search of each other, and a whole kingdom in search of a beat.

It's a party. And you're invited.

## CAST BIOGRAPHIES

**Alaska 5000 (Queen Gynecia)** is a drag performer and recording artist best known for competing in the fifth season of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and the winner of the second season of *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars*. She has traveled the world touring her chart-topping hits from her albums (*Anus*, *Poundcake*, *Vagina*, and forthcoming *Red 4 Filth*) and has appeared in television (VH1's *Scared Famous*, *The Bachelorette*) and film (*The Quiet Room*, *The Last Sharknado: It's About Time*). She currently co-hosts the hit podcast *Race Chaser* with Willam, and continues to inspire the people of Earth with her unmistakable brand of irreverent humor and extraterrestrial glamour.

**Lea DeLaria (King Basilius)** seems to have achieved overnight stardom with her three time, SAG Award winning, stand-out role as "Carrie 'Big Boo' Black" in the Netflix hit series *Orange is the New Black*. However, DeLaria's multi-faceted career as a

comedian, actress, and jazz musician, has in fact, spanned decades.

Lea holds the distinction of being the first openly gay comic on television in America which led to countless Television and Film roles portraying Police Lieutenants, PE Teachers, and the Lesbian who inappropriately hits on straight women.

Selected TV credits: *The Code*, *Shameless*, *Broad City*, *Baroness Von Sketch*, *The Jim Gaffigan Show*, *Awkward*, *Clarence*, *Californication*, *The Oblongs*, *One Life to Live*, *Law and Order: SVU*, *Will & Grace*, *Friends*, and *Matlock*. Selected Film credits: *Cars 3*, *Support the Girls*, *First Wives Club*, *Dear Dumb Diary*, *Edge of Seventeen*.

She's received Obie & Theater World Awards, and a Drama Desk nomination for her portrayal as "Hildy" in the Public Theater's revival of *On the Town*, and has played both "Eddie" and "Dr. Scott" in the gender-bending Broadway musical *The Rocky Horror Show*.

Lea was the featured vocalist at the 50th Anniversary of the Newport Jazz Festival, and has performed in some of the most prestigious houses in the world including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Chicago Symphony, Hollywood Bowl, The Royal Albert Hall, and the Sydney Opera House.

Lea has five records on the Warner Jazz and Classics label and her book *Lea's Book of Rules for the World* is in its third printing at Bantam Doubleday and Dell. Her sixth record, *House Of David delaria+bowie=jazz*, was released in the Summer of 2015 to critical acclaim.

Lea can currently be seen as 'Professor Mendelson' in Apple TV's *Physical*, 'Queenie' in Hulu's *Reprisal*, and as 'Molly Yarnchopper' in the Netflix and DreamWorks animated series *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*. Follow Lea on Twitter and Instagram @realleadelaria and FaceBook.

**Yurel Echezarreta (The Player)** is making his Pasadena Playhouse Debut. Broadway: *Moulin Rouge!*, *Head Over Heels*, *Aladdin*, *Matilda*, *La Cage aux Folles*, *West Side Story*. TV/ Film: Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story* (Dec. 2021), *The Last Five Years*, *Alternatino*, *Odd Mom Out*, among others. Instagram: @yurele

**Tiffany Mann (Pamela)** TV: NBC's *New Amsterdam*, NBC's *Rise*, and *Orange Is the New Black*. Broadway: *Be More Chill* and *Waitress*. Off-Broadway: *Jerry Springer the Opera* (Lucille Lortel Award), *Invisible Thread*, and *Cabin in the Sky*. Other theater: *Smokey Joe's Cafe* at The Muny, *Dreamgirls*, Live from Lincoln Center: *Sweeney Todd*

**George Salazar (Musidorus)** was last seen onstage as "Seymour" in Pasadena Playhouse's critically acclaimed production of *Little Shop of Horrors* and is beyond thrilled to return to the Playhouse in *Head Over Heels*. He is best known for originating the role of "Michael Mell" in *Be More Chill* (Lucille Lortel Award, two Broadway.com

Audience Choice Awards, and Drama Desk & Outer Critics Circle Award nominations). Other NY theater credits include *Godspell* (2011 Bway revival), *The Lightning Thief* (Drama Desk nom.); *tick, tick...BOOM!*; *Here Lies Love*. TV credits include “George Conway” in *Impeachment: American Crime Story*; “Eric Sosa” in *Superstore*; *Nancy Drew*; *Bull*; *Divorce*. Albums: *Two-Player Game*, *Be More Chill*, *The Lightning Thief*, *The Jonathan Larson Project*, *Godspell*. @georgesalazar

**Emily Skeggs (Mopsa)** is a Tony and Grammy Award-nominated actor, writer, and vocalist. A born and bred New Yorker, she was nominated for both a Tony and Grammy award for her work in the Broadway award-winning production of *Fun Home*, directed by Sam Gold. Her off-Broadway and regional theater credits include *Take Me Along* and *Transport* at the off-Broadway Irish Rep, David Cromer’s *Our Town* at the Huntington Theater Company, and Naomi Wallace’s *And I and Silence* at the Signature Theatre Company. Film and television credits include WGN’s *Salem*, Dustin Lance Black’s ABC miniseries *When We Rise*, and Lifetime’s *Love You To Death* starring opposite Marcia Gay Harden, the American High feature *The Ultimate Playlist of Noise* on Hulu, and the anticipated feature *Dinner in America*, from director Adam Rehmeier, which debuted at Sundance 2020. You can currently find her in Los Angeles, where she maintains a small urban food farm. She recently taught her cat to sit.

**Shanice Williams (Philoclea)** is an American actress and singer best known for her performance as “Dorothy” in the televised live performance of NBC’s *The Wiz Live!* Recently, Shanice played a recurring role in the NBC comedy *Perfect Harmony* with Bradley Whitford and Anna Camp and will be seen guest starring in the upcoming season 4 of *The Last O.G.*, opposite Tracy Morgan and Da’Vine Joy Randolph. Shanice is 25 and lives in Los Angeles.

## CREATIVES BIOGRAPHIES

**James Magruder (Adaptation):** James Magruder made his Broadway debut with the book for *Triumph of Love*. His adaptations of Marivaux, Molière, Lesage, Labiche, Gozzi, Hofmannsthal, Dickens, and Giraudoux have been staged across the country, in Germany and Japan, and his dissertation, *Three French Comedies*, was named an “Outstanding Literary Translation of the Year” in 1997. Also a fiction writer, he has published *Sugarless*, a Lambda Literary Award Finalist; *Let Me See It*, a story collection; *Love Slaves of Helen Hadley Hall*; and the just-released *Vamp Until Ready*. He teaches dramaturgy at Swarthmore College and French drama at the Yale School of Drama.

**The Go-Go’s (Music & Lyrics):** The Go-Go’s are band members Charlotte Caffey, Belinda Carlisle, Gina Schock, Kathy Valentine, and Jane Wiedlin and they will forever have the beat! These female pioneers formed The Go-Go’s in 1978 and were an integral part of the LA punk scene. The Go-Go’s made history as the first, and to date only, all-female band that both wrote their own songs and played their own instruments to ever top the Billboard charts. Their 1981 debut album, *Beauty and the Beat*, was #1 on the charts for six consecutive weeks and it remains one of the most successful debut



albums of all time. Other albums include *Vacation* (1982), *Talk Show* (1984), and *God Bless The Go-Go's* (2001). With a 1982 Grammy nomination for Best New Artist, a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and a place in history that no other band can claim, it is assured that The Go-Go's will keep going with a classic catalog of songs that transcends time, trends, and genres. In 2021 The Go-Go's were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

**Jenny Koons (Director/Choreographer):** Jenny Koons is a theater director and organizer. Theater Projects: 2021 Vision Resident (Ars Nova), *Now Becomes Then* (Actors Theatre of Louisville), *Men on Boats* (Baltimore Center Stage), *Speechless* (New Blue Man Group North American Tour), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Public Theater Mobile Unit), *Burn All Night* (American Repertory Theatre), *Gimme Shelter* (Why Not Theatre, 2015 Pan American Games commission), *A Sucker Emcee* (National Black Theatre, LAByrnth Theater Company). Jenny was the 2017 curator of the Encores! Off-Center Lobby Project, co-curator of the 2016 ThisGen Conference, and co-founder of Artists 4 Change NYC (National Black Theatre). She has been a facilitator and educator in creating anti-racist spaces and engaging in conversations around race and equity for over a decade, in both non-profit and artistic spaces. She is a steering committee member of [The Ghostlight Project](#), founded and leads Let's Talk About Hard Stuff, an AAPI anti-racist affinity space, and is co-author of the [open letter to Biden/Harris](#) demanding cabinet-level representation for Arts and Culture.

**Sam Pinkleton (Director/Choreographer):** Sam Pinkleton is a Tony Award-nominated director, choreographer, educator, and organizer based in Los Angeles. In LA his work has been seen in the Center Theater Group productions of *Soft Power*, *Amélie*, and *Kansas City Choir Boy*, starring Courtney Love. His work on Broadway includes *Natasha*, *Pierre*, and *the Great Comet of 1812* - starring Josh Groban and Denée Benton - as well as *Significant Other*, *Heisenberg*, *Amélie*, and *Machinal*. Collaborations with Jenny Koons include the electropop club musical *Burn All Night* at American Repertory Theater and the youth-led civic spectacular *Runaways* at New York City Center and in Central Park. Other recent highlights of his work include *Untitled DanceShowPartyThing* (created with Ani Taj) for Virgin Voyages and new opera productions for The Dutch National Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Opéra National de Montpellier. He's a collaborating artist with The Civilians, The Dance Cartel, and Pig Iron Theater Company, and a lecturer at Princeton University. *The New York Times* has described his work as "how the Ramones might have danced if Bob Fosse choreographed them." He does not own any dance shoes.