



Contact: Davidson & Choy Publicity | Tim Choy
t.choy@dcpubli-city.com
Peter Goldman p.goldman@dcpubli-city.com | 323 954 7510

Kory Kelly – CMCO, Pasadena Playhouse:
kkelly@pasadenaplayhouse.org / 626 792 8672 Ex. 202

**Pasadena Playhouse Announces Its
Largest Expansion with the Inaugural Season of Youth and Family
Programming, Including Full Productions of:**

**The World Premiere of
Grumpy Monkey, The Musical
Adapted From the *New York Times* Bestselling Picture Book
by Suzanne Lang & Max Lang
February 3 – March 3, 2024**

***Wheels on the Bus*
The Favorite Children’s Song Comes to Life
in this Grown Up-and-Me Adventure
April 27 – June 2, 2024**

**Additional events and classes include *Amal Walks Across America*,
Baby Rave, *Holiday Groove: A Family Dance Workshop*,
Playhouse Players musical theater classes,
summer musical theater camps and the creation of
the Playhouse Teen Alliance**

October 23, 2023, Pasadena, CA | On Saturday, October 21, Pasadena Playhouse hosted its first-ever ***Family Play Day***, bringing together thousands of people for performances, activities and crafts, where Producing Artistic Director Danny Feldman officially announced the Playhouse’s inaugural season of youth and family programming. These programs will expand its audience to include the youngest members of the community, and build the next generation of theatergoers and theatermakers.

Two professional productions are being offered to younger audiences and their families – the world premiere of ***Grumpy Monkey, The Musical*** from February 3 through March 3, commissioned by the Playhouse, based on the book *Grumpy Monkey* by Suzanne and Max Lang, adapted and directed by Nina Meehan, with music and lyrics by Daniel Mertzluft and Jacob Ryan Smith, and ***Wheels on the Bus***, from April 27 through June 2. Both of these professionally produced productions will be presented at Porticos Art Space, located at 2033 E. Washington Blvd, Pasadena, CA 91104.

Other youth and family events include ***Baby Raves*** on Saturday, November 4, ***Holiday Groove: A Family Dance Workshop*** led by Broadway's Sam Pinkleton, whose Playhouse credits include *Head Over Heels* and *Pasadena Playhouse Holiday Spectacular* on Saturday, December 16. In addition, Pasadena Playhouse will be leading after-school and summer programming with the formation of the **Playhouse Players**, where 7 - 12 year olds will have the chance to create and perform in musical theater productions, **Musical Theater Boot Camp** geared toward talent development for 13 - 17 year olds, and the formation of a new professional development program, **Playhouse Teen Alliance**. Pasadena Playhouse will also be presenting ***Amal Walks Across America*** on Nov 1 at 5 PM at Pasadena City Hall (100 Garfield Avenue, Pasadena) in partnership with Deaf West Theatre, Armory Center for the Arts, and The City of Pasadena.

Danny Feldman, Producing Artistic Director of Pasadena Playhouse, says, "We believe that experiencing plays and making live theater should be for everyone, especially kids. This major expansion is rooted in our extraordinary history as one of the leading theater schools in America, with an aim to engage and spark creativity and imagination at a critical time for these young artists and audience members. By opening our doors wider to include thousands of young people and their families every year, our impact on our community will expand greatly and will resonate for years to come."

Erin Baker, Chairperson of Pasadena Playhouse Board of Trustees, adds, "As the State Theater of California, we feel it is the right time for this expansion and to lead the field. By returning to our roots and increasing access to the theater for children and their families, we are growing the future of arts creators and attendees, and ensuring that theater everywhere can once again flourish. This pivotal moment is possible because of Pasadena Playhouse's vibrant team of dreamers and doers, who are generously supported by a community of believers."

Tickets and information for all youth and family programming events 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. More information on summer camps will be released in the coming weeks.

These events mark the Playhouse's largest expansion to date: a commitment to providing access to productions, classes, and workshops specifically created for youth and family audiences. The Playhouse was founded on community-based work, education and professional training, and world-class productions for everyone. This return to youth and family programming will include fully produced, professional productions for families, classes, camps, and more.

Pasadena Playhouse's youth and family programming would not be possible without the generous support of The Fitzberg Foundation. This project is also funded in part by a grant from Pasadena Community Foundation.

PASADENA PLAYHOUSE YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMMING

YOUTH AND FAMILY PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTIONS

***Grumpy Monkey, The Musical* (February 3 – March 3, 2024)**

Written by Nina Meehan

Music & Lyrics by Daniel Mertzlufft & Jacob Ryan Smith
Adapted from the Book by Suzanne Lang & Max Lang
Directed by Nina Meehan

Meet Jim Panzee and all his friends as they enjoy a wonderful day of exciting adventures. There's just one problem; Jim is in no mood for any fun OR games and no one knows why! The hilarious #1 *New York Times* bestselling picture book comes to life on stage in a world premiere musical. *Grumpy Monkey, The Musical* is the perfect story for families and kids because we all experience those big feelings. Not every day is a good one, and that's okay.

Saturdays 10:00 AM, 1:00 PM

Sundays 11:30 AM, 2:30 PM

Location: Porticos Art Space 2033 E. Washington Blvd, Pasadena, CA 91104

Recommended for 4-8 year olds and their families

Price: \$32 + \$4 Fee (Everyone ages 2+ need a ticket)

Playhouse Members receive 20% off the ticket price with no fee

In addition to the public performances, Pasadena Playhouse will be presenting 18 student matinees throughout the run of Grumpy Monkey, The Musical, providing early access to the arts for nearly 3,600 Pasadena Unified School District students.

Wheels on the Bus (April 27 – June 2, 2024)

All aboard! Join our exciting, interactive adventure that's perfect for toddler and preschool theater lovers to explore and examine the world around them. *Wheels on the Bus* will delight all who ride and is sure to keep the laughs coming round and round – don't miss your chance to go on this unforgettable grown up-and-me journey filled to the brim with immersive fun for everyone.

Saturdays and Sundays at 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM

Location: Porticos Art Space 2033 E. Washington Blvd, Pasadena, CA 91104

Recommended for 6 month - 4 year olds and their adults

Price: \$15 + \$2 Fee (Everyone ages 1+ needs a ticket)

Playhouse Members receive 20% off the ticket price with no fee

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YOUTH AND FAMILY COMMUNITY EVENTS

Amal Walks Across America – In the silence

Wednesday, November 1, 2023 – 5:00 PM

Pasadena City Hall – 100 Garfield Ave, Pasadena CA 91101

For all ages

Little Amal is a 12-foot puppet of a 10-year-old Syrian refugee girl, spreading her story of hope as she discovers the beating heart of America, its blended culture and diverse people. During her walk through Pasadena, Little Amal encounters a group of Deaf children. This touching moment reminds us that sometimes, words aren't everything. In the silence, we discover that

the loudest truths are often conveyed without a sound. Join us as we celebrate the power of unity, diversity, accessibility and the profound impact of storytelling. In partnership with Deaf West Theatre, Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena Playhouse and the City of Pasadena.

Baby Rave

Saturday, November 4, 2023 – 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM and 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Price: \$5 for people ages 1+ , free for 1-12 month olds

Carrie Hamilton Theatre at Pasadena Playhouse

Recommended for children under 5 and their families

It's never too early to hit the club! Join us for a kid-friendly dance party where you and your littlest ones can groove to the thumping sounds and flashing lights of our very first *Baby Rave*. The music will be hot, the fun props will be all around the dancefloor, and you'll discover just how fun and enriching a little dance party with LA's future movers and shakers can be!

Holiday Groove: A Family Dance Workshop

Saturday, December 16, 2023 – 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM and 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Price:\$10 per family (up to 8 people)

Carrie Hamilton Theatre at Pasadena Playhouse

Recommended for ages 7+

Bring your kids, your mom, your grandma, your wild Aunt Becky for an all-energy, all-ages, all-abilities dance and choreography workshop led by Tony-nominated director and choreographer Sam Pinkleton. The class will bring families and friends ages 7 to 100 together to throw down their most surprising moves and call their families collaborators while they work together to make their own unique and tailor-made group dances. Wear clothes you can move in and leave your fear of looking silly at the door.

PLAYHOUSE PLAYERS (FOR 7 - 12 YEAR OLDS)

Playhouse Players Present Disney's Finding Nemo KIDS (January 30 - May 23, 2024)

Tuesdays and Thursdays at Porticos Art Space from 3:30 - 5:00 PM

Tuition: \$550

Scholarships and Payment Plans Available

Ages 7 – 12

Get ready to hit the stage and become a Playhouse Player. We're launching our first after-school musical theater class and we're looking for the most spirited young theatermakers – no previous experience needed, there's a role for everyone! Students will get together once a week for 90 minutes to try their hands at all things singing, dancing, and acting as they work toward a final performance of a popular musical for kids. Join us weekly at Porticos Art Space as we go on this new theatrical journey!

Playhouse Players: SUMMER CAMP!

Dates and Location to be announced soon

Ages 7 – 12

Join us for our *Playhouse Players Summer Camp*! We're bringing together our young

theatermakers for an incredible 2-week summer adventure. Campers will gather daily to learn about acting, singing, dancing, and so much more from some top-notch instructors all culminating in a showstopping final performance of a popular musical for kids. There's no better way to spend your summer than with your Playhouse friends!

TEEN TRAINING PROGRAMS (13 - 19 YEAR OLDS)

Playhouse Teen Alliance

Ages 14 – 19

The Playhouse Teen Alliance is an after-school program hosted by Pasadena Playhouse for current high school students. Teens will enjoy monthly workshops with theater industry professionals, see free shows at the Playhouse, and gain volunteer experience by working as an usher. This program seeks to expose students to a broader range of theatrical skills, knowledge, and career pathways that they might not otherwise get to experience within their high school education. As well as foster community and encourage new connections between the next generation of theatrical leaders and professionals in the field. The Playhouse is offering this program at no cost to students.

Musical Theater Boot Camp

Dates and location to be announced soon

Ages 13 – 17

We're thrilled to announce our Musical Theater Boot Camp is back! Pasadena-area high school students, get ready to join us this summer! Students focus on the audition process rather than a production, allowing them to enter the college application season with a repertoire of monologues and songs, as well as the skills needed to find material appropriate for their age and type. Industry professionals and guest artists will instruct students in acting, singing, dancing, movement, theater history, and the college theater landscape. Each session culminates in a showcase for family and friends.

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About Suzanne Lang

Suzanne is the author of the *New York Times* bestselling *Grumpy Monkey*, as well as several other titles. When Suzanne is not working on books, she writes and produces children's television.

About Max Lang

Max is an animation director, storyboard artist, character designer, and illustrator. He co-directed the film adaptation of the picture book *The Gruffalo*, which was nominated for an Oscar Award and a BAFTA Award, as well as the Oscar-nominated adaptation of the picture book *Room on the Broom*, which has won numerous awards, including the Cristal for Best TV Production at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival.

About Nina Meehan

Nina is an award-winning TYA director, playwright, and producer and a dedicated arts educator, with expertise in creativity and communication. Nina was the founder of Bay Area Children's Theatre, which was the largest TYA company in California prior to Covid. Nina boot-strapped the

organization to a \$5 million annual budget with a reach of 1 million audience members. Nina's theatrical work for young people has toured nationally and internationally. She has commissioned new musicals for young people based on the *New York Times* Bestselling book, *Press Here* by Herve Tullet, Chelsea Clinton's book *She Persisted*, Grace Lin's *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*, and Sherry Duskey Rinker's *Goodnight, Goodnight Construction Site*, just to name a few. Nina dreamed up and spearheaded the first ever 41-theater co-commission of *A Kids Play About Racism* during the pandemic to produce an online show that subsequently reached 400,000 kids at no cost to the children or the schools.

Her work as a playwright includes the world-premiere adaptation of *Goodnight Gorilla* by Peggy Rathman, *Wheels on the Bus*, *Bloom Kaboom*, all four award-winning *K'ilu Adventures* co-created with Jonathan Shmidt Chapman and, in collaboration with Daniel Mertzlufft, the *Kids Fight Evil Villain Audio-Choose-Your-Own-Adventures* musicals produced during the Pandemic to ensure that kids at home still had access to engaging and entertaining theatrical experiences.

Nina served as the board president of TYA/USA for five years and has had the honor of being an invited speaker for the National Endowment for the Arts in Partnership with TCG. She has been a featured speaker for the Conscious Leadership Group (guest speaker with Diana Chapman), EO (Entrepreneur Organization), at Visioni, the largest festival in the world focused on Theatre for the Very Young in Bologna, Italy, and many other organizations and podcasts. Nina has been a workshop leader and adjudicator at Junior Theatre Festivals across the USA and in Australia. She has proudly been featured as a speaker at two TedX events with a focus on the importance of creativity in everyday life.

Nina holds a BS in Theatre from Northwestern University and a Master's in Nonprofit Administration from the University of San Francisco and is currently working on her PhD in Creativity Studies. She is also a certified yoga instructor. Her work has been spotlighted in the *New York Times*, *LA Times*, *American Theatre Magazine*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Barron's*, *Red Tricycle*, *ABC*, *NBC*, and *CBS*.

About Daniel Mertzlufft

Daniel is a NYC based composer/arranger most known for his viral sensations The Thanksgiving Musical on The Late Late Show with James Corden, launching the TikTok Ratatouille musical movement, and was the Executive Producer, Composer and Music Supervisor for For You, Paige, the first ever TikTok commissioned musical. Daniel also served as Music Supervisor, composer and arranger for Ratatouille: The TikTok Musical, a live streamed concert that raised over \$2 million for The Actor's Fund, as well as the Music Supervisor for Dylan Mulvaney's Day 365 Of Girlhood. He is also known for his viral song "In My Head," written with Jacob Ryan Smith and performed by Andrew Barth Feldman and Joe Serafini, which has been praised for its portrayal of joyful, young, queer love.

Daniel's work for young audiences includes the beloved adaptation of Construction Site on Christmas Night which premiered in San Francisco in 2019 and the upcoming release of Dot and The Kangaroo which is being released internationally through the Junior series of musicals through Music Theatre International. Daniel works as a music supervisor, music director and arranger with iTheatrics in New York City, having worked on over 40 adaptations of Junior shows and his work has been featured at the Junior Theatre Festivals in Atlanta, Sacramento, Australia, New Zealand and England. <https://danielmertzlufft.com/>

About Jacob Ryan Smith

Jacob is a writer/performer living in New York, originally hailing from Atlanta, GA. Some of his writing credits include *Like Father* (Book, Music, Lyrics), *Mr. Sipple* (Book, Music, Lyrics), *Into the Burrow: A Peter Rabbit Tale* (2023 Alliance Theater Commission, Music & Lyrics), and *Painless: The Opioid Musical* (Book, Music, Lyrics). His original compositions have been featured on Disney+ (*Hamster & Gretel*, co-written with Dan Povenmire), *The Today Show*, *NPR*, *Out Magazine*, and many other publications. He loves to dive into other mediums with his music as well, including ballet (*Marey was Dead, to Begin With* commissioned by Terminus Modern Ballet and produced in 2020), and choral work (*Shelter me: An Oratorio on Homelessness* commissioned by The Dallas Street Choir and to be produced in 2024). His theatrical pop single "In My Head," which he wrote with his writing partner Daniel Mertzlufft, has accumulated millions of streams on Spotify. Jacob is also a working performer, most recently being in the Off-Broadway cast of *Lizard Boy* and originating the role of Adam in *Relapse: the Musical* Off-Broadway. He also received a 2023 Suzi Bass Nomination for his performance as Gabe in *Next to Normal* at the Jennie T Anderson Theater. He holds a BFA in Musical Theater Performance and a Minor in Composition from The University of Michigan.

<https://jacobsmith.com/>

ABOUT PASADENA PLAYHOUSE

Pasadena Playhouse, the official State Theater of California and recipient of the 2023 Regional Theatre Tony Award, is one of the most prolific theaters in the country. The Playhouse has staged thousands of original productions since its founding in 1917 including premieres of works by Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill, Suzan Lori Parks, and hundreds more. For decades, its pioneering School for Theater Arts was a training ground for actors and theatermakers who went on to make significant contributions to the entertainment industry. Under the leadership of Producing Artistic Director Danny Feldman since 2016, Pasadena Playhouse's productions and community programs are centered on its founding idea of being a living force in its community, making theater for everyone. pasadenaplayhouse.org.

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CALENDAR LISTINGS

World Premiere of

Grumpy Monkey, The Musical

Written by Nina Meehan

Music & Lyrics by Daniel Mertzlufft & Jacob Ryan Smith

Adapted from the Book by Suzanne Lang & Max Lang

Directed by Nina Meehan

Venue: Porticos Art Space 2033 E. Washington Blvd, Pasadena, CA 91104

Dates: February 3 - March 3, 2024

Tickets: \$32 + \$4 Fee (Everyone ages 2+ needs a ticket)
Member Price: 20% OFF with No Fee
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

Performance Schedule: Saturdays 10:00 AM, 1:00 PM
Sundays 11:30 AM, 2:30 PM

Ages: 4-8 year olds and their families

Wheels on the Bus

Venue: Porticos Art Space 2033 E. Washington Blvd, Pasadena, CA 91104

Dates: April 27 – June 2, 2024

Tickets: \$15 + \$2 Fee (Everyone ages 1+ needs a ticket)

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

Performance Schedule: Saturdays and Sundays at 9:00 AM, 11:00 AM

Ages: 6 month old - 4 year olds and their adults