



Contact: Davidson & Choy Publicity | Tim Choy t.choy@dcpublicity.com
Peter Goldman p.goldman@dcpublicity.com | 213-500-8532

Kory Kelly – CMCO, Pasadena Playhouse:
kkelly@pasadenaplayhouse.org / 626 243 7009

Casting Announced for 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

Tickets at pasadenaplayhouse.org or by calling 626-356-7529

December 5, 2023, Pasadena, CA | Pasadena Playhouse announces casting for the world premiere of ***Grumpy Monkey, The Musical*** from February 3 through March 3, commissioned by the Playhouse, and based on the book *Grumpy Monkey* by Suzanne and Max Lang. This is the first full production of the Playhouse's newly announced you and family programming initiative. The production will feature Hao Feng (Lifetime's *Twisted Little Lies*) as Jim Panzee, Marc Ginsburg (*Ragtime* at Pasadena Playhouse) as Norman, Kay Sibal (*Spring Awakening* at East West Players) as Snake, Ciarra Stroud (*Grease* at Drury Lane Theatre) as Marabou, Frankie Zabilka (*Newsies* at 5-Star Theatricals) as Lemur, and Danny Holmberg (*She Loves Me* at Conundrum Theatre Company) as Understudy.

Grumpy Monkey, The Musical is adapted and directed by Nina Meehan, with music and lyrics by Daniel Mertzlufft and Jacob Ryan Smith. This professionally produced production will be presented at Porticos Art Space, located at 2033 E. Washington Blvd, Pasadena, CA 91104. Tickets 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.

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.

Hao Feng is ecstatic to be making his Playhouse debut! Film: *Twisted Little Lies* (Lifetime). Theater: *The Dance and the Railroad* (Artists at Play/A Noise Within); *Twelfth Night*, Pericles (Independent Shakespeare Company); *Nightwalk in the Chinese Garden* (The Huntington Library/CalArts Center for New Performance). Voiceover: *Heavenly Delusion* (Hulu), *Alchemy of Souls*, *Somebody* (Netflix); *Soundtrack #1* (Disney+). MFA in Acting, CalArts; MPhil in Music and Science, University of Cambridge; Bachelors in Neuroscience and Piano Performance, Emory University. In his free time, Hao can be found doing martial arts, photography, or eating. Mostly

eating. Being born in the year of the monkey, he has always had a penchant for monkeying around. OOH OOH AHH! @haothefeng

Marc Ginsburg Marc is not the least bit grumpy about being a part of this production and telling this fun and important story! A seven-time Ovation Award Nominee, singer, voiceover artist, audiobook narrator, expert movie quote reciter, and Philadelphia sports enthusiast, Marc is especially excited to be back in Pasadena, where he was a part of Pasadena Playhouse's productions of *Ragtime* (Tateh – Ovation nomination) and *Sunday in the Park With George*. Other credits include performing over 500 times as Sammy in the First National Tour of the Tony Award winning production of *The Band's Visit*, *First Date* (Aaron – Ovation Nomination), *Evita* (Che – Ovation Nomination), *Shrek* (Lord Farquaad – San Diego Critics Circle Nomination), *Spamalot* (Sir Lancelot), *The Producers* (Leo Bloom), and many others. IG: marc_ginsburg FB: marcginsburgpage

Kay Sibal (she/her/hers) is delighted to bring this joyous show to life. Recent theater credits include Juliet in the world premiere of *Invincible: The Musical* (Wallis Annenberg Center of Performing Arts), Miranda in *The Tempest: An Immersive Experience* (Shakespeare Center Los Angeles/After Hours Theater Co), Female Understudy in *Spring Awakening* (East West Players), *The Princess in The Shadow* (Mixed Emotion Theatrix). With a choral and pop music background, she has performed in venues such as the Fox Theater in Oakland, The Bourbon Room in Hollywood, the Hollywood Bowl, and on The Late Late Show with James Corden. Thanks to her family, teachers, and manager for being her personal cheerleaders. Website: kaydsib.weebly.com @ka_dot_sibal

Ciarra Stroud is so pleased to make her Pasadena Playhouse debut with *Grumpy Monkey, The Musical!* Some past credits include Elizabeth Jelkes in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; The Girl with the Date in *Blues in the Night* (North Coast Rep Theatre); Frenchy in *Grease* (Drury Lane Oakbrook); Squirrelle 2 in *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play"* (Marriott Lincolnshire); Eve in *The Apple Tree* (Porchlight Music Theatre); The Witch in *Into the Woods* (Myers Dinner Theatre); and Catherine in *Pippin*, and Armelia in *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Timber Lake Playhouse). Special thanks to her father and grandmothers for all their love and support, to Roy for bringing so much laughter to her life, and to her mother, who is always in her heart.

Frankie Zabilka makes his Pasadena Playhouse debut in this exciting world premiere. TV/Film: *Rebel* (ABC), *Chang Can Dunk* (Disney+). National Tour: *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: The Musical* (Hermey) Regional: *Something Rotten!* (Nigel), *Newsies* (Davey), *Cinderella* (Jean-Michel) at 5-Star Theatricals, *Fiddler on the Roof* (Motel) at Western Playhouse. Frankie recently appeared in a campaign with Will Arnett, as well as industry readings of Paul Williams' *Fortunate Sons* (Cliff) at Skylight Music Theatre and *The Black Dahlia* (Frank). He hosts Encore! at The Bourbon Room Hollywood. A Chicago area native, Frankie holds a BFA from Ball State University. Special thanks to the creative team, cast, Rothman/Andrés, and FSE. Love to Tianna and his family. For Erica. @frankiezabilka

Danny Holmberg is thrilled to be a part of Pasadena Playhouse's *Grumpy Monkey, The Musical!* Recent LA credits include *She Loves Me*, *Zanna Don't* (Conundrum Theatre Company) and *Title of Show* (Firefly Theatre Group). He is a graduate of Fordham University at Lincoln Center in NYC, and couldn't be more grateful to have such wonderful musical theater opportunities out here on the West Coast. He is so grateful to the amazing cast and team behind this show!

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.

—

CALENDAR LISTING

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