

**JOHN  
CLARENCE  
STEWART**



**Jelly Roll Morton**

*(P-Valley, Netflix's Zoey's  
Extraordinary Playlist)*

**CRESS  
WILLIAMS**



**Chimney Man**

*(Living Single, The CW's  
Black Lightning)*

**JASMINE  
AMY  
ROGERS**



**Anita**

*(Star of Broadway's upcoming  
BOOP! The Musical)*

lead cast of  
***JELLY'S LAST JAM***

**Book by George C. Wolfe**

**Music by Jelly Roll Morton**

**Lyrics by Susan Birkenhead**

**Musical Adaptation and Additional Music**

**Composed by Luther Henderson**

**Directed by Kent Gash**

**Music Direction by Darryl Archibald**

**Choreography by Dell Howlett**

**Wednesday, May 29, 2024 to Sunday, June 23, 2024**

**Press Opening June 2, 2024**

**Tickets at [pasadenaplayhouse.org](http://pasadenaplayhouse.org)**

PASADENA, CA (March 28, 2024) – Danny Feldman, Producing Artistic Director of Pasadena Playhouse, the State Theater of California and recipient of the 2023 Regional Theatre Tony Award, announces casting for its new production of the Tony Award winning musical ***Jelly's Last Jam*** (May 29 to June 23), featuring a book by George C. Wolfe, music by Jelly Roll Morton, and lyrics by Susan Birkenhead with musical adaptation and additional music composed by Luther Henderson. The production will be directed by Kent Gash, with music direction by Darryl Archibald, and choreography by Dell Howlett.

The cast of ***Jelly's Last Jam*** is led by John Clarence Stewart (*P-Valley*, Netflix's *Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist*) as Jelly Roll Morton, Cress Williams (*Living Single*, The CW's *Black Lightning*) as Chimney Man, and Jasmine Amy Rogers (star of Broadway's upcoming *BOOP! The Musical*) as Anita. Additional casting to be announced at a later date.

The creative team includes Edward E. Haynes, Jr. (Scenic Designer), Samantha Jones (Costume Designer), Rui Rita (Lighting Designer), Danny Erdberg and Ursula Kwong Brown (Sound Designers), with Casting by RBT Casting (Ryan Bernard Tymensky, CSA). The Stage Management team includes lark hackshaw (Production Stage Manager) and David S. Franklin (Assistant Stage Manager).

When legendary musician Jelly Roll Morton's soul is forced to face the music, the self-proclaimed "inventor of jazz" is left at the ultimate crossroads. Follow Jelly from the back alleys of New Orleans to the sparkling stages of New York, as his remarkable journey unfolds in a stunning display of song, dance, and music. With soulful melodies, electrifying tap dancing, and fiery tunes that will leave you breathless, get your groove on with this dazzling musical masterpiece.

Recipient of three Tony Awards, six Drama Desk Awards, and three 1992 Outer Critics Circle Awards including Best Broadway Musical, ***Jelly's Last Jam*** "makes the invention of jazz a miraculous, eruptive theatrical event... not merely an impressionistic biography of the man who helped ignite the 20th-century jazz revolution, but also a sophisticated attempt to tell the story of the birth of jazz in general and, through that story, the edgy drama of being black in the tumultuous modern America that percolated to jazz's beat" (*New York Times*)

Tickets and information for ***Jelly's Last Jam*** are available at [pasadenaplayhouse.org](https://pasadenaplayhouse.org), by phone at 626-356-7529, and at the box office at 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101.

### **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.

## Calendar Listing for *Jelly's Last Jam*

### ***Jelly's Last Jam***

Book by George C. Wolfe

Music by Jelly Roll Morton

Lyrics by Susan Birkenhead

Musical Adaptation and Additional Music Composed By Luther Henderson

***"In telling the story of Jelly, the story of jazz,  
Ya gotta have grit to go with the gravy."***

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

Dates: Wednesday, May 29 to Sunday, June 23  
Press opening Sunday, June 2 at 5:00 p.m.

Tickets: Prices start at \$44  
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: Wednesday-Friday evenings at 8:00 p.m. & Tuesday, June 4 at 8:00 p.m.  
Saturday at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.; Sunday at 2:00 p.m.; Sunday, June  
23 at 7:00 p.m.

### **BIOGRAPHIES**

For a full list of company bios to date, visit  
<https://www.pasadenaplayhouse.org/event/jellys-last-jam/>

**John Clarence Stewart** (Jelly Roll Morton): John was most recently seen as Big Teak in the latest season of the hit show, *P-Valley*, written by Pulitzer Prize Winner Katori Hall. John was born and raised in Stone Mountain GA, and started his theater journey in the Atlanta theater community. He moved to NY after performing as Tray in the world premiere of *brownsville song (b-side for tray)* at the Actors Theatre of Louisville. John made his television debut on the series *Gotham* and *The Mysteries of Laura*. Since then he has played lead roles in notable shows such as NBC's *Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist* and *What If...?*, as well as *Marvel's Luke Cage* on Netflix. This past year, John starred in a solo performance at 54 Below. *BroadwayWorld* called him, "the most authentic, the most genuine, the most sincere person an audience could ever hope to find on a stage." This year, John debuted his self-written and performed one man show, *Soft As It Began*, in the Stripped Bare Arts incubator project with Synchronicity Theater in Atlanta.

**Cress Williams** (Chimney Man): Cress is best known for starring as DC's title-character in The CW's critically acclaimed Greg Berlanti drama series, *Black Lightning*. Additionally, he also stars in the murder-mystery film, *What Remains*, alongside Kellan Lutz and Anne Heche. Other film credits include *Two Days in the Valley* opposite James Spader, Jeff Daniels, Teri Hatcher, and

Charlize Theron; as well as *Never Been Kissed* with Drew Barrymore, Michael Vartan, and David Arquette. Some theater credits include *Othello*, *Elephant Man*, *Extremities*, and *Red Noses*. Television credits include *ER*, *NYPD Blue*, *The West Wing*, *Grey's Anatomy*, and *Friday Night Lights*. Cress can also be seen in four successful seasons as a series regular on *Hart of Dixie* with Rachel Bilson, in addition to stints on *Prison Break*; *Living Single*; *Nash Bridges*; *Close to Home*; *Code Black*; *Cold Case*; and *Beverly Hills, 90210*.

**Jasmine Amy Rogers** (Anita): Jasmine recently wrapped a run in Chicago as the title character in the Broadway bound production of *BOOP! The Musical*, reteaming her with director/choreographer Jerry Mitchell. She played the scene stealing Gretchen Wieners in the National Tour of *Mean Girls*, was seen as Melody Green in Paper Mill Playhouse's production of *The Wanderer* and as Francis Basseby in the world premiere of *Becoming Nancy*, directed by Jerry Mitchell at the Alliance Theatre. TV includes *Evil* on Paramount+. She was a Jimmy Awards' finalist and appeared in *Cabaret* as Sally Bowles at the Manhattan School of Music where she studied musical theater.

**Kent Gash** (Director): Co-Author and Director, *Something to Live For* at Pittsburgh Public (*BroadwayWorld* Best New Musical), *The Three Musketeers* at Oregon Shakespeare and The Acting Co. Tarell McCraney's *Choir Boy*, Steppenwolf, Studio Theatre (Jeff & Bay Area Critics Awards). LA: August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean* at South Coast Rep, *Harriet's Return* at Geffen Playhouse. NYC: *Barbecue* at the Public, *Lockdown* at Rattlestick, *Miss Evers Boys* (NYC premiere) at Melting Pot. Select from 100+ Award winning Regional: *Guys and Dolls* at the Guthrie; *The Wiz* at Ford's Theatre; "*Master Harold*"...and the Boys at Arizona Theatre Company; Tarell McCraney's *Wig Out!* at Studio Theatre DC and Sundance; *Jelly's Last Jam*; *Pacific Overtures*; *Topdog/Underdog* (Norton Award); *God of Carnage*; *Five Guys Named Moe*; Quiara Hudes' *Elliot, a Soldier's Fugue*; and 26 MILES, as the Associate Artistic Director at Alliance Theatre (2001-2009). *Troilus and Cressida*, *Godspell*, *Twelfth Night*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Beehive*, as Associate Artistic Director at Alabama Shakespeare Festival (1999-2001). Kent is the current Artistic Director at The Acting Company (2021-present) and Founding Director of New Studio on Broadway, Tisch, NYU. BFA: Carnegie-Mellon. MFA: UCLA.

**Darryl Archibald** (Music Director): *Some Like It Hot* (Broadway – Shubert Theatre); *Motown: The Musical* (Broadway – Nederlander Theatre); *Yemandja* the new Angelique Kidjo musical (music supervisor – world tour); *Jelly's Last Jam* (guest conductor – New York City Center); Bob Fosse's *Dancin'* (Pre Broadway engagement – The Old Globe); *Encore!* on Disney+ (*Ragtime* episode); *The Color Purple* (Broadway tour and Paper Mill Playhouse); *Wicked* (substitute conductor – Pantages Theater); *Memphis* (Broadway tour); *A Little Night Music*, *Ragtime*, *Little Shop of Horrors* with M.J. Rodriguez (Pasadena Playhouse); *Dear World* with Tyne Daly (VPAC); *Two By Two* with Jason Alexander (Reprise); *Passion* (Boston Court); Jonathan Dove's *Innocence* (Banff Centre). Full bio at [darrylarchibald.com](http://darrylarchibald.com).

**Dell Howlett** (Choreographer): Dell is a New York based Virginia born choreographer/director. Selected credits: *Forsyth County Is Flooding* (Atlanta Opera), *Malvolio* (Classical Theatre of Harlem), *Billy Strayhorn: Something to Live For* (Pittsburgh Public Theatre), *Toni Stone* (Alliance Theatre and Milwaukee Repertory) *It Came From Outer Space* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater and TheatreSquared), Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* (Alabama Shakespeare Festival), *Guys and Dolls* (Guthrie Theatre), *Paradise Square* (Associate to Bill T. Jones, Berkeley Repertory Theatre), *The Wiz* (Ford's Theater), *WigOut* (Studio Theater), *The C.A. Lyons Project* (Alliance Theater). Head of Dance at NYU/Tisch School of the Arts in the Department of Drama's New Studio on Broadway. Upcoming: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Summer 2024, Classical Theatre of Harlem), *Mandela the Musical* (Fall 2024), and *Furlough's Paradise* (Spring 2025, Geffen Playhouse). IG: @aristotlejr

**George C. Wolfe** (Book): Theatre directing credits include *The Iceman Cometh*, *Shuffle Along*, or the *Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921* and *All That Followed* (NY Drama Critics' Circle Award and Drama Desk Award for Best Musical); *Lucky Guy*; *The Normal Heart* (Drama Desk); *Jelly's Last Jam* (Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Award); *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* (Tony Award and Drama Desk) and *Perestroika* (Drama Desk); *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk* (Tony and Drama League Award); *Topdog/Underdog* (Obie Award); *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (Drama Desk); Elaine Stritch at Liberty (Tony for Special Theatrical Event); *The Tempest*; *Caroline, or Change* (Olivier Award Best Musical); and *A Free Man of Color*. From 1993-2005 Wolfe was the Producer of The Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival. He is the writer of the award-winning *The Colored Museum*, *Shuffle Along...*, he directed/adapted *Spunk* (Obie Award), and *Harlem Song*.

**Ferdinand La Menthe "Jelly Roll" Morton** (Music): Morton was born in the Creole gentry of New Orleans in 1891, but was irresistibly drawn to the excitement of the infamous Storyville district where he made his reputation as a pianist. At a young age he left New Orleans to travel the country, landing in Chicago in the 1920s. He and his band, The Red Hot Peppers, became the top black recording artists for RCA Records in 1927-1928. Morton's music integrated the sounds of ragtime, blues, African rhythms and French opera, establishing him as one of the great jazz pioneers. But by 1930 his music was considered old hat. He died in Los Angeles in 1941.

**Susan Birkenhead** (Lyrics): Susan Birkenhead received a Tony Nomination, a Grammy nomination and a Drama Desk Award for her lyrics for *Jelly's Last Jam*, which she wrote with George C. Wolfe. She was nominated for a Tony award for *Working*, and a Drama Desk Award for *Triumph of Love*. She won an Outer Critics Circle Award for *What About Luv?* and a Los Angeles Drama Critics Award for *Minsky's*.

She wrote additional lyrics for *High Society* on Broadway, and was one of several writers of *A My Name Is Alice* and *Stars of David* off Broadway.

*The Secret Life of Bees*, which she's written with Lynn Nottage and Duncan Sheik, is currently playing in London.

Her musical, *On Cedar Street*, which she's written with Emily Mann and Carmel Dean will be done this summer at The Berkshire Theatre Group. *BOOP! The Musical*, which she's written

with David Foster and Bob Martin, will go into rehearsal in October, directed and choreographed by Jerry Mitchell, for a quick tryout in Chicago, then Broadway.

**Luther Henderson** (Musical Adaptation and Additional Music Composition): Luther Henderson was a composer, arranger, orchestrator, music director, and performer with a long and impressive career spanning multiple genres. Henderson worked on more than 50 Broadway productions. He served as the original pianist and orchestrator, arranger, and musical supervisor for *Ain't Misbehavin'*. For *Lena Horne: The Lady and Her Music*, he was the musical consultant and arranged several selections. He orchestrated the Tony Award-winning *Raisin* and *Play On!* As a dance arranger, Henderson's credits included *Flower Drum Song*, *Do Re Mi*, *Funny Girl*, and *No, No Nanette*. He also had a robust recording career, featuring albums with the Canadian Brass Quintet, Eileen Farrell, Columbia Records, the Duke Ellington Orchestra, the Andre Kostelanetz Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic, Mandy Patinkin, Polly Bergen, Anita Ellis, and others. (Sources: *National Endowment for the Arts*, *Playbill.com*)