

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES 22ND SEASON

*Lineup includes award-winning plays and Broadway favorites,
runs September 2024 to September 2025*

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (25 March 2025) —**San Francisco Playhouse** has announced its 22nd season, to be presented September 2024 to September 2025. Unveiled at a special event last night to an enthusiastic group of Playhouse supporters and fans, Artistic Director **Bill English** and Producing Director **Susi Damilano** revealed the two musicals and four plays the nonprofit theatre company will present at its home theatre in the heart of San Francisco's Union Square Theatre District, 450 Post Street. Subscriptions are now available; single tickets will be available in the coming months at sfplayhouse.org.

San Francisco Playhouse's 22nd season will give Northern Californian audiences their first look at two important new works. The lineup includes a piping hot 2022 Pulitzer Prize-winning Shakespeare adaptation, a fresh-baked Broadway musical favorite, a wonderfully wacky new work about MSG and racist misinformation, a hilarious whodunit full of mischievous mayhem, an imaginative Olivier and Tony Award-winning adaptation of a beloved young adult novel, and a Tony Award-winning musical masterpiece.

"We're putting joy at the center of this season," said San Francisco Playhouse Artistic Director **Bill English**. "With incredible humor and heart, each of these pieces offer up joy to heal communities and bring people together. Creating theatre is an inherently joyous act, a celebration for our audiences and of the artists who come together to tell captivating stories. We look forward to joining together in our Empathy Gym this upcoming season to revel in the transformative power of shared experiences."

The season begins in the fall with the Olivier Award-winning comedy ***The Play That Goes Wrong*** (September 21 – November 9, 2024). This fast-paced farce full of slapstick silliness and inventive theatricality finds the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society on opening night of its newest production, ***The Murder of Haversham***. As the incompetent theatre troupe attempts to stage this 1920s murder mystery, their production devolves into madcap mayhem. Lost props, forgotten lines, and poorly constructed scenery conspire against the clumsy cast, who fight for the show to go on and to survive until the final curtain call. Written by London's Mischief Theatre co-founders **Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer, and Henry Shields**, ***The Play That Goes Wrong*** has performed for almost a decade in the West End, winning the Olivier Award for Best New Comedy before transferring to Broadway. *Entertainment Weekly* said, "***The Play That Goes Wrong*** is just right: a ridiculously entertaining disaster." *The New York Times* deemed it a "gut-busting hit. One of those breakneck exercises in idiocy that make you laugh till you cry. It starts off punch-drunk and just keeps getting drunker." San Francisco Playhouse Producing Director and co-founder **Susi Damilano**, who has staged silly spoofs at the Playhouse

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including *Noises Off*, *Clue*, and most recently *The 39 Steps* (which performs at the Playhouse until April 20, 2024), helms this hilarious whodunit.

During the holidays, the Playhouse will serve up the beloved Broadway favorite ***Waitress*** (November 21, 2024 – January 18, 2025), also directed by **Susi Damilano** with music direction by **Dave Dobrusky**. Featuring a tasty, tuneful score by Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter **Sara Bareilles** and a fresh-baked book by **Jessie Nelson**, this sweet musical confection follows Jenna, a waitress for a small-town diner. Trapped in a loveless marriage and unexpectedly pregnant, Jenna copes by crafting perfect pies and dabbling in a whirlwind romance with her doctor. A baking contest offers Jenna the hope to escape her unhappy life as she chases her dreams and rediscovers herself along the way. Based on the Fox Searchlight Pictures film of the same name written by Adrienne Shelly, ***Waitress*** premiered at American Repertory Theater before opening on Broadway. It was nominated for four Tony Awards including Best Musical and Best Original Score and ran for nearly four years with a limited return engagement. *Time Out New York* said, “the whole dish is love at first bite,” while *The New York Times* said the musical “rises to transporting heights and sweeps up your heart along with it.”

The Playhouse will ring in 2025 with the Northern California Premiere of ***Keiko Green’s Exotic Deadly: Or the MSG Play*** (January 30 – March 8, 2025). Set in 1999, Japanese American high schooler Ami is trying to fit in with her American peers when she discovers her family helped create MSG, the supposedly addictive and dangerous ingredient that’s gained infamy. When a mysteriously cool new girl arrives at school, Ami vows to find the truth and save the world from MSG. Spiced with anime and 90s pop culture influences, this whimsically wacky time-traveling adventure is a riotous romp through teenage crushes, family legacies, and the magical properties of instant ramen. ***Exotic Deadly: Or the MSG Play*** received its World Premiere at The Old Globe, where it was called “wildly funny. Smart and hilarious” by *The San Diego Union-Tribune* while *BroadwayWorld* declared it “frenetic and fantastical.” **Jesca Prudencio**, who directed the show at The Old Globe, reunites with Green to helm the San Francisco Playhouse production.

The season continues with the Northern California Premiere of 2022 Pulitzer Prize-winning ***Fat Ham*** (March 20 – April 19, 2025). Playwright **James Ijames** turns William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* on its head in this piping hot play that transports the drama to a modern-day barbecue in the American South. Queer Black college kid Juicy longs to break his crazy family’s cycle of trauma and violence when his father’s ghost demands Juicy avenge his murder. With family feuds and a dance party on the menu, this delectably irreverent, poignant play explores legacy and identity, love and loss, as well as pain and joy. Making its World Premiere in a filmed production presented by Wilma Theater, ***Fat Ham*** received the 2022 Pulitzer Prize for Drama ahead of its in-person premiere Off-Broadway at The Public Theater. The production transferred to Broadway in 2023, where *The Wrap* called it “the most fun you’ll have at any play this Broadway season” and it was nominated for five Tony Awards including Best Play. *Deadline* lauded it as “a delicious and irresistible piece of work. Sweet, saucy, and very funny, ***Fat Ham*** has enough good-time disco sparkle to win over all but the grumpiest of spirits.” *The New York Times* hailed the show as “hilarious yet profound. It is the rare takeoff that actually takes off — and then flies in its own smart direction.” Bay Area theatre titan **Margo Hall**, who directed the Playhouse’s [*hieroglyph*], *Barbecue*, *Red Velvet*, *The Story*, and most recently *Nollywood Dreams*, returns to direct.

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In the spring the Playhouse will stage the Olivier Award and Tony Award-winning ***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*** (May 1 – June 21, 2025), written by **Simon Stephens** based on the novel of the same name by **Mark Haddon**. With imaginative storytelling that captivates the senses, this dynamic play follows 15-year-old mathematics genius Christopher, who is autistic. Upon the discovery of the death of his neighbor's dog, he launches on an investigation that takes him on a thrilling journey that upturns his world. Premiering at The National Theatre, the show transferred to the West End, where it won seven Olivier Awards including Best New Play. It later opened on Broadway, where it won five Tony Awards including Best Play as well as six Drama Desk Awards and five Outer Critics Circle Awards. It has since been performed around the world. *Vogue* lauded the play as "a testament to the singular power of theater," while *TIME* called it "a play that works on every level — crowd-pleasing, eye-opening, life-affirming and unmissable." Award-winning Bay Area theatre artist **Erika Chong Shuch**, who choreographed the Playhouse's *My Home on the Moon* and *Coraline*, directs this production.

The 2024-25 season will conclude with a new production of a classic Broadway musical (July 3 – September 13, 2025). This production will be announced in May 2024.

In chronological order, the San Francisco Playhouse 2024/25 season is as follows:

The Play That Goes Wrong

By Henry Lewis, Henry Shields, and Jonathan Sayer

Directed by Susi Damilano

September 21 – November 9, 2024 (opening night: September 27)

This Olivier Award-winning comedy is a hilarious hybrid of Monty Python and Sherlock Holmes. Welcome to opening night of *The Murder at Haversham Manor* where things are quickly going from bad to utterly disastrous. This 1920s whodunit has everything you never wanted in a show—an unconscious leading lady, a corpse that can't play dead, and actors who trip over everything (including their lines). Nevertheless, the accident-prone thespians battle against all odds to make it through to their final curtain call, with hilarious consequences!

Henry Lewis is an Olivier Award-winning writer, actor, and producer whose work has been produced in over 40 countries worldwide. Recently seen on Broadway and in the West End in *Peter Pan Goes Wrong* which he co-wrote, he also wrote and acted in *Magic Goes Wrong* co-created with magicians Penn & Teller, BBC1's "The Goes Wrong Show," *Groan Ups*, *The Comedy About A Bank Robbery*, *The Play that Goes Wrong*, *Mischief Movie Night*, BBC1's "A Christmas Carol Goes Wrong." **Jonathan Sayer's** theatre credits include writing and performing *Peter Pan Goes Wrong* on Broadway and in the West End as well as writing and acting in *Mind Mangler: Member of the Tragic Circle*, *Magic Goes Wrong* co-created with magicians Penn & Teller, *Groan Ups*, *The Comedy About a Bank Robbery*, *The Play That Goes Wrong*, *Mischief Movie Night*, and *Lights! Camera! Improvise!*.

Henry Shields is an Olivier Award-winning writer and has been a member of Mischief Theatre since 2009. Theatre credits include *The Play That Goes Wrong*, *Peter Pan Goes Wrong*, *The Comedy About a Bank Robbery*, *Groan Ups*, *Magic Goes Wrong*, *Mischief Movie Night*. Television work includes BBC1's "Peter Pan Goes Wrong," BBC1's "A Christmas Carol Goes Wrong," BBC1's "The Goes Wrong Show," BBC1's "Holby City," and ITV1's "The Royal Variety Performance."

Susi Damilano (Director) is co-founder and producing director of the Playhouse. She has directed many West Coast

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Premieres and World Premieres in addition to Playhouse productions of *The 39 Steps*, *Clue*, *Indecent*, *Groundhog Day the Musical*, *Cabaret*, *Mary Poppins*, *Noises Off*, *She Loves Me*, *Stage Kiss*, *Company*, *Stupid Fucking Bird*, *Into the Woods*, *A Behanding in Spokane*, *Den of Thieves*, and *Wirehead*. She won San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle (SFBATCC) Award for her direction of *Indecent* and is a five-time recipient of the SFBATCC Excellence in Theatre Award for Principal Actress in a Play.

Waitress

Music and lyrics by Sara Bareilles

Book by Jessie Nelson

Based upon the motion picture written by Adrienne Shelly

Directed by Susi Damilano, Music Direction by Dave Dobrusky

November 21, 2024 – January 18, 2025 (opening night: November 27)

Jenna, a waitress and expert pie maker, is stuck in a small town and a loveless marriage. Faced with an unexpected pregnancy, Jenna fears she may have to abandon the dream of opening her own pie shop until a baking contest in a nearby county and the town's handsome new doctor offer her a tempting recipe for happiness. Supported by her quirky crew of fellow waitresses and loyal customers, Jenna summons the secret ingredient she's been missing all along — courage.

Singer/songwriter **Sara Bareilles** (Music and Lyrics) has been nominated for nine Grammy Awards, won for Best American Roots Performance for "Saint Honesty," and was featured on the Grammy Award-winning album for the revival of *Into the Woods*. With chart-topping hit songs including "Love Song," "King of Anything," and "Brave," Bareilles made her Broadway debut composing the score for *Waitress*, receiving Tony Award nominations for Best Score and Best Musical as well as a Grammy Award nomination for Best Musical Theatre Album.

Jessie Nelson (Book) wrote the book for *Waitress* and co-created the Apple TV+ show "Little Voice" with Sara Bareilles. Nelson wrote, directed, and produced *Corrina, Corrina* starring Whoopi Goldberg and Ray Liotta and *I Am Sam* starring Sean Penn, who received an Academy Award nomination for his performance. Her writing credits include *Stepmom* and *The Story of Us*. Nelson directed *Alice By Heart* which she co-wrote with Steven Sater with music by Duncan Sheik at the National Theatre Connections Program and again Off-Broadway at MCC Theater.

Exotic Deadly: Or the MSG Play

By Keiko Green

Directed by Jesca Prudencio

January 30 – March 8, 2025 (opening night: February 5)

Northern California Premiere

It's 1999, and Ami is an awkward Asian American high schooler whose world comes crashing down with a terrible discovery: her family is responsible for manufacturing MSG, the mysterious ingredient getting all the kids hooked! Meanwhile, a cool new girl arrives from Japan, and she's not playing by the rules. In Keiko Green's play, Ami vows to redeem her family name and save the world from MSG. This whimsical, time-traveling adventure is a riotous and hilarious romp through wild teenaged crushes, family legacies, and the magical properties of instant ramen!

Keiko Green (Playwright) is a playwright, screenwriter, and performer whose plays include *Exotic Deadly: Or the MSG Play*, *Sharon*, *Hometown Boy*, and *Nadeshiko*. Her work has been produced/developed by the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, The Kennedy Center, National New Play Network, Atlantic Theatre Company, Ensemble Studio Theatre, The

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Playwrights Realm, Seattle Repertory Theatre, The Old Globe, ACT Contemporary Theatre, and Cygnet Theatre, among others. As a screenwriter, she wrote on Hulu's upcoming "Interior Chinatown."

Jesca Prudencio (Director) is a director, choreographer, and educator dedicated to developing new theatrical happenings that explore the tension and bridges between cultures. She has a passion for pushing boundaries by experimenting in documentary theatre, immersive theatre, and entertainment. Prudencio has developed original works at The Kennedy Center, La Jolla Playhouse, The Old Globe, The Playwrights Realm, East West Players, National Alliance for Musical Theatre, La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, The Public Theater, and The Movement Theatre Company and directed productions for TheaterWorksUSA, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Geffen Playhouse, San Diego Repertory Theatre, and Mixed Blood Theatre. She was the inaugural recipient of The Julie Taymor World Theater Fellowship and was named a 2021 Woman To Watch on Broadway by the Broadway Women's Fund.

Fat Ham

By James Ijames

Directed by Margo Hall

March 20 – April 19, 2025 (opening night: March 26)

Northern California Premiere

In this modern-day adaptation of *Hamlet*, Juicy is a queer, Southern college kid grappling with his identity. When the ghost of his father shows up at a family barbecue to demand that Juicy avenge his murder, Juicy must confront the cycle of violence and find his own liberation. An uproarious and brilliant Pulitzer Prize-winning play full of humor and heart, *Fat Ham* is a poignant exploration of loss, joy, and resilience that both upends and honors Shakespeare's classic.

James Ijames (Playwright) is a Pulitzer Prize-winning and Tony Award-nominated playwright, director, and educator. Ijames' *Fat Ham* won the 2022 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Steinberg Playwright Award and received a Tony Award nomination for Best Play. Ijames won the Kesselring Prize for *Kill Move Paradise* and he won the Terrence McNally New Play Award for *WHITE*. His plays also include *The Most Spectacularly Lamentable Trial of Miz Martha Washington*; *Welcome Table*; *Passion of Osiris*; *Hymn*; *Tank Stranger*; *Moon Man Walk*; *Phoebe in Birdland*; *Good Bones*; *Reverie*; *The Threshing Floor*; *TJ Loves Sally 4ever*; *Abandon*; *Where We've Been*; and *What is Left, Burns*. Ijames plays have been produced by The Public Theater, Shotgun Players, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Geffen Playhouse, National Black Theatre, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, and many others.

Margo Hall (Director) is the artistic director of Lorraine Hansberry Theatre and an award-winning actor/director/playwright. She returns to San Francisco Playhouse, where she directed [*hieroglyph*], *Barbecue*, *Red Velvet*, *The Story*, and most recently *Nollywood Dreams*. Other directing credits include *In the Evening by the Moonlight* and *Thurgood* for Lorraine Hansberry Theatre; *Friend of My Youth* and *Sonny's Blues* for Word for Word; and *Brownsville Song*, *B-Side for Tray* for Shotgun Players, where she also co-directed *Bulrusher* with Ellen Sebastian Chang.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

A play by Simon Stephens

Based on the novel by Mark Haddon

Directed by Erika Chong Shuch

May 1 – June 21, 2025 (opening night: May 7)

Fifteen-year-old Christopher has an extraordinary brain: he is exceptional at mathematics but ill-equipped to interpret everyday life. He has never ventured alone beyond the end of his road, he

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detests being touched, and he distrusts strangers. Christopher finds himself standing beside his neighbor's dead dog, Wellington, who has been speared with a garden fork. Finding himself under suspicion, Christopher is determined to solve the mystery of who murdered Wellington, interviewing suspects, and carefully recording each fact he uncovers. Soon his detective work takes him on a thrilling journey that upturns his world.

Mark Haddon (Novel) won the Whitbread Book of the Year, Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, the Commonwealth Writers Prize, and Dolly Gray Children's Literature Award for his novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Other books include *The Red House*, *The Pier Falls*, *The Porpoise*, *A Spot of Bother*, *Gilbert's Gobstopper*, the *Agent Z* series, *Boom!*, *The Sea of Tranquility*, and *The Ice Bear's Cave*. He created and wrote several episodes for "Microsoap," winning two BAFTAs and a Royal Television Society Award for this work.

Simon Stephens (Playwright) is a prolific British playwright who has won Olivier Awards for *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *On the Shore of the Wide World*. Other notable plays include *Pornography*, *Birdland*, *Heron*, *Morning Sun*, *I am the Wind*, *Punk Rock*, and *Harper Regan*. Stephens' work has been produced at Britain's National Theatre, the Royal Court, the Royal Shakespeare Company, among many others worldwide. His productions on Broadway include *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Heisenberg*, and *Sea Wall*.

Erika Chong Shuch (Director) is a performance maker, choreographer, and director who choreographed San Francisco Playhouse's *My Home on the Moon* and *Coraline*. Chong Shuch's theatre credits in choreography and direction include work with American Conservatory Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, California Shakespeare Theater, The Old Globe, Arena Stage, The Kennedy Center, La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, Campo Santo, Magic Theatre, Z Space, Portland Center Stage, and Shotgun Players, among others.

Show #6

Directed by **Bill English**

July 3 - September 13, 2025 (opening night: July 9)

This musical will be announced in May 2024.

Bill English (Director) is the co-founder and Artistic Director of **San Francisco Playhouse**. Alongside co-founder Susi Damilano, he has guided its growth from a bare-bones storefront to the second-largest nonprofit theatre company in San Francisco. Milestone accomplishments include introducing Pulitzer Prize winner Stephen Adly Guirgis to the Bay Area by directing three of his plays; commissioning over 30 playwrights including Theresa Rebeck, Aaron Loeb, Lauren Gunderson, Lauren Yee, and Christopher Chen; and developing World Premieres from workshops to Sandbox Series to Mainstage Season to Off-Broadway (including the Off-Broadway transfers of *Ideation* and *Bauer*), and presenting the very first production of *Grounded* by George Brant which later played at the Public Theater.

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE:

Founded by **Bill English** and **Susi Damilano** in 2003, **San Francisco Playhouse** has been described by *The New York Times* as "a company that stages some of the most consistently high-quality work around" and deemed "ever adventurous" by *The Mercury News*. Located in the heart of the Union Square Theater District, **San Francisco Playhouse** is the city's premier Off-Broadway company, an intimate alternative to the larger more traditional Union Square theater fare. The Playhouse provides audiences the opportunity to experience professional theater with top-notch actors and world-class

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design in a setting where they are close to the action. The company has received multiple awards for overall productions, acting, and design, including the SF Weekly Best Theatre Award and the Bay Guardian’s Best Off-Broadway Theatre Award, as well as three consecutive Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards for Best Entire Production in the Bay Area. *KQED/NPR* recently described the company as “one of the few theaters in the Bay Area that has a mission that actually shows up on stage. Artistic director Bill English’s commitment to empathy as a guiding philosophical and aesthetic force is admirable and by living that mission, fascinating things happen onstage.” The Playhouse is committed to providing a creative home and inspiring environment where actors, directors, writers, designers, and theater lovers converge to create and experience dramatic works that celebrate the human spirit.

For more information the public can visit **sfplayhouse.org**. Subscriptions are now available and single tickets will be available in the coming months.

PERFORMANCES: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 7pm
 Wednesdays: 2pm & 7pm
 Fridays: 8pm
 Saturdays: 3pm & 8pm
 Sundays: 2pm

WHERE: San Francisco Playhouse (450 Post Street, San Francisco)

TICKETS: For information the public can visit **sfplayhouse.org**. Subscriptions are now available and single tickets will be available in the coming months.

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PHOTOS: For high-res photos, please visit: http://www.cbpr.co/press/sfp_24-25season/