



**IAMA THEATRE COMPANY OPENS 2024/25 SEASON
WITH WORLD PREMIERE OF
HORRIFICALLY FUNNY NEW WORK
“THE VERY BEST PEOPLE”**

SEPTEMBER 29 – OCTOBER 27, 2024

LOS ANGELES, CA (4 September 2024) — **IAMA Theatre Company**, committed to cultivating new voices and creating new, boundary-pushing work, will begin its 17th season with the world premiere of *The Very Best People* by Drama Desk Award winner and IAMA Theatre Company Ensemble Member **John Lavelle**, directed by **Melissa Coleman-Reed**. On a roll this fall, with two new plays that originated at IAMA on Broadway this season (*JOB the Play*, recently extended to Oct. 27, and *Cult of Love*, starting performances Nov. 20), the Los Angeles-based IAMA unveils a new work that is timely, horrific, and hilarious. After the mysterious shooting of a disgraced NYPD detective, his two childhood friends set out on a mission for redemption, weeks before the U.S. January 6 insurrection. Armed with only brotherhood, alternative truths, and ranch dressing, they hunker down in Angelina's Irish Pub on Staten Island's South Shore and plot to take down the Deep State, one snowflake at a time. What's a little light kidnapping between friends? The cast for *The Very Best People* features **Adrián González***, **Andria Kozica***, **Bryan Langlitz***, **Joseph Russo**, and **Margaux Susi***. *The Very Best People* will be performed **September 29 – October 27, 2024** (*press opening: October 5*) at **Atwater Village Theatre**, 3269 Casitas Ave, Los Angeles. Tickets (\$29-\$45) are available at iamatheatre.com or by calling **323-380-8843**. (* denotes IAMA Theatre Company ensemble members)

“IAMA Theatre Company’s current season is themed ‘In Process’ and John Lavelle’s work is very much in keeping with that focus. *The Very Best People* is a darkly comedic work that dives into the masculinity of Americans, offering a frightening fly-on-the-wall look at how our country is divided. We think audiences will be on the edge of their seats, watching through their fingers,”

said IAMA Theatre Company Artistic Director **Stefanie Black**. “This play started here at IAMA in our Ensemble Writers’ Group and we are now thrilled to offer this world premiere production.”

Committed to the development of new work, IAMA is invested in being an artistic home for emerging and established Los Angeles-based artists and playwrights by supporting a pipeline for new plays from their inception through production, such as *The Very Best People*. In addition to its Ensemble Writers’ Group, IAMA’s Emerging Playwrights Lab was inaugurated in 2019, which gives playwrights a one-year residency, where writers meet monthly to share and develop a full-length play in a peer-guided format. Members of the Lab are given dramaturgical support from IAMA’s artistic and literary staff as well as a ticket to each of IAMA's productions. The Lab culminates in readings of each member's full-length plays in a potentially public format the following summer. It was in IAMA’s Lab that Max Wolf Friedlich’s wrote *JOB the Play*, currently on Broadway through October 27. IAMA also offers commissions, including the Rhimes Unsung Voices commission sponsored by IAMA Patron of the Arts Shonda Rhimes and the Rhimes Foundation, which supports a writer from an underrepresented community.

John Lavelle (Playwright) is an American stage, film, television actor, and playwright who spent much of his career appearing on Broadway, perhaps best known for his role as Benjamin Braddock in John Reid's 2002 Broadway adaptation of *The Graduate*, where he starred opposite Lorraine Bracco, as well as Off-Broadway, regionally, and at the Royal Shakespeare Company. He is the author of several plays including *Inhalation* (Max Lerner Award, O’Neill Finalist), *Sinner’s Laundry* (a Los Angeles Ovation recommended production), and his work has appeared in ABC’s “Discovers Talent Showcase.” He received a Drama Desk Award for his performance in *The Royale* at Lincoln Center Theater and is an ensemble member of IAMA Theatre Company and part of the improv team Some Kinda Monster at The Upright Citizens Brigade. Lavelle has appeared on TV and film in numerous roles, most notably portraying Roy Reed in Ava DuVernay’s Academy Award-nominated film “Selma.” As a voice artist, Lavelle has worked for Disney, Netflix, and DreamWorks and is the voice of the beloved children’s book series *Nate the Great*.

“I wrote this play hoping to make sense of where I come from, the contradiction of my ‘home’ to where my heart lives now. I wanted to write an antiracist play using the characters from my past, the people who at one point I loved deeply, but now seem so foreign,” said *The Very Best People* playwright **John Lavelle**. “I want audiences to laugh very hard and think about the very thin line between hypothetical violence and physical violence. We all have met the very best people in our lives, but I don't think we get a chance to meditate on how dangerous they really are and how willing they are to carry out their plans.”

Directing *The Very Best People* is **Melissa Coleman-Reed**, an international theatremaker, director, actor, producer, and facilitator who is focused on the development of new works that foster activism and grow international collaborations. She has collaborated with arts organizations including Geffen Playhouse, IAMA Theatre Company, New Village Arts Theatre, Ammunition Theatre Company, CalArts, Cal State LA, Playwrights' Arena, The Blank Theatre, The Road Theatre Company, and The Inkwell Theatre LAB.

IAMA Theatre Company has assembled a talented cast for *The Very Best People*, which includes IAMA Ensemble Member **Adrián González** as Brian Anthony, a ride-share driver navigating life after prison. González was last onstage in IAMA's world premiere production of *Arrowhead* and has worked with L.A. theatre companies such as A Noise Within, The Echo Theater Company, Playwrights' Arena, Boston Court, HorseChart Theatre Company, Skylight Theatre Company, and Casa 0101 Theater. He can be seen in television and films including “With Love,” “The Garcias,” “Vida,” “Superstore” “The Affair,” “Kevin from Work,” “Your Family or Mine,” “The Bridge,” “NCIS,” “NCIS LA,” and “The Mentalist.”

IAMA Ensemble Member **Andria Kozica** plays Fanny, an overstressed pediatric hospital nurse and fiancée to Brian Anthony. She has been featured in IAMA productions of *Smile*, *Celestial Events*, *The Last Bohemian*, and *A Man Named River*. Other recent theatre credits include *Much Ado About Nothing* at Downtown Rep, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* at Yorba Linda Spotlight Theater Company, *Boeing Boeing* at Little Fish Theatre, *Cymbeline* with Shakespeare by the Sea, *The Understudy* at Bull & Bearer Theatre Co., and *Lebensraum* at Harold Clurman Lab Theater, which earned her a Los Angeles Ovation Award nomination.

IAMA Ensemble Member **Bryan Langlitz** will take on the role of Jak, Fanny's stepbrother and owner of Angelina's Irish Pub. He has been seen on Broadway in *Memphis*, Off-Broadway in *The Comedy of Errors*, in the National Tour of *Million Dollar Quartet*, and at various L.A. theatre companies including IAMA Theatre Company, Odyssey Theatre Ensemble, Indie Chi Productions, and HBO Workspace Hollywood. Langlitz' television and film work includes "House of Cards," "Orange Is the New Black," "The Looming Tower," and "Secrets of Sulphur Springs."

Joseph Russo will be making his IAMA Theatre Company debut as Joey, a former NYPD cop suffering grief for no longer being a part of force, and much more. Primarily a television and film actor, his work includes "The Offer," and Clint Eastwood's "Jersey Boys." He most recently worked alongside David Arquette in "Mob Cops."

Margaux Susi, who is an IAMA ensemble member as well as IAMA's associate artistic director, will play Lara Amanda, a conservative talk show host. She has performed on the IAMA stage in *Species Native to California* and *Celestial Events*. She has also performed with the hit improv show "The Blind Date Project," that completed sold-out runs in New York, Edinburgh, Williamstown, and Los Angeles. On the small screen she can be seen in "Better Things," and "Dear White People," and heard on "Central Park," and "Olaf's Frozen Adventure." As a director, Margaux's films have played Sundance, Tribeca, and Palm Springs.

The production team bringing *The Very Best People* to life on stage includes **Jordan Bass** (Casting Director), **Erin Bednarz** (Sound Designer), **Nicole Bernardini** (Properties Designer), **Benedict Conran** (Lighting Designer), **Roella Dellosa** (Production Stage Manager), **Zander Eckhouse** (Video Designer), **Samantha Jones** (Costume Designer), **Lauren Lovett** (Dialect Coach), **Christopher Scott Murillo** (Set Designer), **Zachary Phaneuf** (Technical Director), and **Celina Lee Surniak** (Intimacy and Fight Director). The understudies for *The Very Best People* are **Sam Bianchini**, **Amitai Porat**, and **James Luster**.

IAMA Theatre Company offers Pay What You Can tickets (suggested price of \$5) for the October 7, 14 and 21 performances of *The Very Best People*, increasing access to theatre and

inviting audiences to see the show at whatever price they can afford.

ABOUT IAMA THEATRE COMPANY

Founded in 2007, **IAMA Theatre Company** is a Los Angeles-based ensemble of artists committed to cultivating new voices, creating new works that push boundaries and take risks, and fostering an inclusive community that inspires a new generation of theatermakers and audiences. Designated by *Playbill* as “one of 20 regional houses every theater lover must know,” “an LA intimate theater gem” by *KCRW*, and a “creative force on the local theatre scene” by the *Los Angeles Times*, the award-winning company is dedicated to developing and producing new plays and musicals by emerging and established playwrights, including over 25 world, West Coast and Los Angeles premieres. Recent and upcoming Broadway productions that first started at IAMA include Max Wolf Friedlich’s *JOB the Play* and Leslye Headland’s *Cult of Love*. The backbone of the company, IAMA’s ensemble members have been featured in numerous critically acclaimed TV shows and films as well as a vast array of theatre and live performances on and off Broadway, across the country, and around the world. IAMA is invested in challenging audiences with authentic experiences that reflect the complex modern world.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: **IAMA Theatre Company**, committed to cultivating new voices and creating new, boundary-pushing work, will begin its 17th season with the world premiere of *The Very Best People* by Drama Desk Award winner and IAMA Theatre Company Ensemble Member **John Lavelle**, directed by **Melissa Coleman-Reed**. On a roll this fall, with two new plays that originated at IAMA on Broadway this season (*JOB the Play*, recently extended to Oct. 27, and *Cult of Love*, starting performances Nov. 20), the Los Angeles-based IAMA unveils a new work that is timely, horrific, and hilarious. After the mysterious shooting of a disgraced NYPD detective, his two childhood friends set out on a mission for redemption, weeks before the U.S. January 6 insurrection. Armed with only brotherhood, alternative truths, and ranch dressing, they hunker down in Angelina's Irish Pub on Staten Island's South Shore and plot to take down the Deep State, one snowflake at a time. What’s a little light kidnapping between friends? The cast for *The Very Best People* features **Adrián González***, **Andria Kozica***, **Bryan Langlitz***, **Joseph Russo**, and **Margaux Susi***. (* denotes IAMA Theatre Company ensemble members)

WHEN: **September 29 – October 27, 2024**
Previews: September 29-30, October 1, October 3-4, 2024
Press Opening: 8pm, Saturday, October 5
Closes: October 27, 2024

SHOWS: Previews: 8pm (September 29-30, October 1, October 3-4)
Thursdays-Saturdays: 8pm (no Thursday, October 17 performance)
Sundays: 2:00pm

Pay What You Can: October 7, 14 and 21

WHERE: Atwater Village Theatre, 3269 Casitas Ave, Los Angeles

TICKETS: \$29-\$45

INFO: Information and tickets are available at iamatheatre.com or by calling **323-380-8843**

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<https://cbpr.co/press/verybestpeople/>