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**First Look Behind the Scenes
Pasadena Playhouse's World Premiere Musical,
Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile: The Musical
&
Announcing "Pay It Forward" Ticket Initiative
Benefitting Fire-Impacted Families
Plus Free Student Performances for Thousands of
Pasadena Unified and Los Angeles Area Students**

**February 15 - March 16, 2025
at The Colony Theatre in Burbank
Tickets at pasadenaplayhouse.org or by calling 626-356-7529**

January 24, 2025, Pasadena, CA | Pasadena Playhouse shares a first look behind the scenes and announces the cast and creative team of their world premiere musical adaptation, ***Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile: The Musical***. The Playhouse also launches a "Pay It Forward" ticket initiative, which enables audiences and community members to purchase tickets that will be distributed free of charge to families impacted by the tragic Los Angeles fires. In addition to public performances, Pasadena Playhouse will bring thousands of students from Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD) and other schools in the greater Los Angeles area to free student performances. Additionally, PUSD students will receive in-school workshops to deepen their learning experience.

The cast of this production will feature McKenna Michael Bisaha (HBO's *Barry*) as Lyle, Christopher Romero-Sosa (*Newsies* Regional Tour) as Josh, Jetta Juriansz (*Spring Awakening* Pre-Broadway run of *The Karate Kid: The Musical*) as Katie/Judy, Trae Adair (*Mr. Student Body President*) as Joseph, Max Gonzalez (*Bunny Bust*) as Hector/Grumps/Ensemble, Cori Jaskier (TheaterWorks USA's *Charlotte's Web*) as Trudy/Scaly/Ensemble and Marisa Moenho (PCPA's *Little Shop of Horrors*) as Understudy.

Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile: The Musical, from EGOT-winners Benj Pasek and Justin Paul (*La La Land*, *Dear Evan Hansen*, and *The Greatest Showman*), and based on the book *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile* and

The House on East 88th Street by Bernard Waber, is the second world premiere musical from the Playhouse's Youth and Family program following the highly successful sold-out run of *Grumpy Monkey, The Musical*. Music and lyrics by EGOT winning songwriters Benj Pasek and Justin Paul along with Ari Afsar, Emily Xu Hall, Jorjah Kwamé and Mark Sonnenblick—the team that wrote the songs for the 2022 film version of *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile*. The libretto is written by Timothy Allen McDonald (*Between The Lines*, Roald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach*) and Sara Wordsworth (*In Transit*, Disney Live Entertainment) and directed by Nina Meehan (*Grumpy Monkey, the Musical*). This world premiere will feature songs from the recent movie as well as new songs created especially for this production by the same award-winning songwriters. This Youth and Family production will be presented by Pasadena Playhouse in partnership with The Colony Theatre located at 555 N. 3rd. Street, Burbank, CA 91502.

Tickets, including **Pay It Forward Tickets**, are available at [pasadenaplayhouse.org](https://www.pasadenaplayhouse.org), by phone at 626-356-7529, and at the box office at 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101. Pasadena Playhouse will be the first to produce this fully realized production of ***Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile: The Musical*** in partnership with The Colony Theatre.

Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile: The Musical splashes onto the stage with a song to sing! Join Lyle as he and his new human friends face their fears and find their voices. Inspired by Bernard Waber's much-loved picture books, this lively musical features new music by EGOT-winning composers Benj Pasek and Justin Paul (*The Greatest Showman*, *Dear Evan Hansen*, *La La Land*). A celebration for the whole family, ***Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile: The Musical*** is packed with humor, heart, and showstopping tunes that will have audiences of all ages roaring with song.

This is the second year of Pasadena Playhouse's expanding Youth & Family Program and ***Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile: The Musical*** is the second world premiere musical for families since the program's launch. In addition to theatrical productions for families, the Playhouse offers numerous youth classes and camps year round serving thousands of children in Pasadena and the greater Los Angeles area year round.

Pasadena Playhouse's Youth & Family Programming and ***Lyle, Lyle Crocodile: The Musical*** would not be possible without the generous support of the Fitzberg Foundation, Apriem Advisors, U.S. Bank, Helen and Will Webster Foundation, Dwight Stuart Youth Fund, L.L. Foundation for Youth, Michael J. Connell Foundation, Pasadena Community Foundation, Pasadena Showcase House for the Arts, California Arts Council, and the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture.

For a full list of creative team bios to date, visit

<https://www.pasadenaplayhouse.org/event/lyle-lyle-crocodile/>

McKenna Michael Bisaha (Lyle): McKenna Michael (they/them) is so excited and honored to bring Lyle to life at the Colony Theatre! Their latest projects include *The Incomplete List...* (PRISM Festival NYC), *Barry* (HBO Max), *The Lesson* (Ars Nova), and *Frozen Live! at the Hyperion* (Disneyland), *Shrek* (3D Theatricals). Huge thanks to Tim, Nina, Mom, Dad, Johnny, and my love, Wren. Follow along @mckennamichael

Christopher Romero-Sosa (Josh): Christopher Romero Sosa has been performing for 16 years, having been in over 25 stage productions including *Spring Awakening* (Moritz), *A Chorus Line*

(Paul), and a regional tour of *Newsies* (Crutchie). Since 2022, he has worked on 20 short-form film projects including multiple theses at Chapman University. Most recently Christopher starred in a proof of concept which he co-wrote and executive produced. A Mexican-American, 1st Gen graduate from UCLA, Christopher finished with a degree in Global Studies, though – he spent his first 3 years in the competitive Ray Bolger Musical Theater program. He is more than ecstatic to be making a return to the stage in *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile: The Musical*!

Jetta Juriansz (Katie/Judy): Jetta Juriansz is a writer/performer based in NYC who was most recently a standout performer in the 2023 CBS Diversity Sketch Comedy Showcase. Known for her sketch comedy, Jetta was a series regular on the sketch series *STUDIO C*, a Diversity Scholarship recipient at The Groundlings Theatre, and originated the part of 'Ali Mills' in the pre-Broadway run of *The Karate Kid: The Musical*. She has also written and produced many of her own projects, including *Bleh*, *Happy Birthday, Faye*, and her original music and music videos. You can see her performing with her UCB Maude team monthly in NYC.

Trae Adair (Joseph): Trae Adair is grateful and excited to be making his Pasadena Playhouse debut! He was recently seen as Hud in *Hair* at Sierra Repertory Theatre. Some of his past favorite roles include: Willard in *Footloose* (Morgan-Wixson Theatre) BroadwayWorld – Best Performer nominated, Jack in *Into the Woods* (CupcakeTheatre), Benny in *Rent*, Ernst in *Spring Awakening* (CupcakeTheatre), and Lamar in *Godspell*. You can also see him as Brandon Greebs in the series, *Mr. Student Body President* (Streamy Awards – Ensemble Cast). He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Texas at Arlington, then moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in acting. What an honor it is to be chosen for this production! @itsatraeslife

Max Gonzalez (Hector/Grumps/Ensemble): Max Antonio Gonzalez (he/him) is an actor, singer, dancer, and choreographer based in Brooklyn, NY. Recent credits: *The Music Man* (Marriott Theatre), *Cabaret* (Barrington Stage Co.), *The Three Musketeers* (The Acting Company National Tour), *Romeo & Juliet* (The Acting Company National Tour), Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* (Alabama Shakespeare Festival), and *The Angel Makers* (She-NYC Arts Festival). Developmental: *Lempicka* (Broadway Choreography Pre-Pro), *The Death of Desert Rose* (Off-Broadway Work Session), *Aura* (29-Hour Reading at New York Theatre Workshop), and *Stuck in the 90's* (29-Hour Reading). Training: NYU Tisch at the New Studio on Broadway. Get in touch: Maxantoniogonzalez.com and @maxgonzo13

Cori Jaskier (Trudy/Scaly/Ensemble): Cori is so excited to be a part of *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile: The Musical* with Pasadena Playhouse!! Education: NYU/Tisch School of the Arts, New Studio on Broadway. Past projects: *For You Paige on Tiktok* (Ensemble), TheaterWorksUSA's international tour of *Charlotte's Web* (Charlotte), *Ratatouille: The TikTok Musical* (Ensemble), the off-Broadway premiere of *The Scarlet Savior* (Emma), new musicals: *Absolute Zero* (Edith), *Mimosa* (Mimosa), *The Valley* (Colby), *America Project* (Madison) and Ray Evans Seneca Theater's productions of *Avenue Q* (Kate Monster), *Into the Woods* (Cinderella), and *Rent* (Maureen). She would like to thank her family and friends for their constant love and support. @cjaskier and corijaskier.com

Marisa Moenho (Understudy): Marisa is so happy to bring *Lyle* to life in her Pasadena Playhouse debut. She is a recent graduate of UCLA's School of Theatre, Film & Television and a two-time Jimmy Award finalist. Credits include: *Tootsie* (Moonlight Amphitheater, *Elf* (Theatre at the Welk), *42nd Street* (Musical Theatre West & Moonlight Amphitheater), *The Light in the*

Piazza (CCA); *Hairspray* (San Diego Musical Theater & Tibbies: Center Stage), *Memphis* (Moonlight Amphitheater & Tibbies: Center Stage), *Little Shop of Horrors* (PCPA), *Cabaret* (PCPA). UCLA: *Sweet Charity*, *Into the Woods*, *Hair*. @marisamoenho

Benj Pasek and Justin Paul (Music & Lyrics): Oscar, Grammy, Tony, Emmy, and Olivier Award-winning songwriters/producers Benj Pasek & Justin Paul are best known for their work on *La La Land*, *Dear Evan Hansen*, and *The Greatest Showman*. Their songs “City of Stars” and “Audition (The Fools Who Dream)” (co-written with Justin Hurwitz) from *La La Land* were both nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Song, with “City of Stars” winning the Academy Award as well as the Golden Globe in the same category. The following year, in 2018, Pasek & Paul won their second Golden Globe for Best Original Song for “This Is Me” from *The Greatest Showman*, which was also nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Song and a Grammy Award for Best Song Written for Visual Media.

Ari Afsar (Music & Lyrics): Ari Afsar is a writer and performer whose work has been featured at Berkeley Rep, LJP, McCarter Theatre, and NMTC at O’Neill, where she won the Georgia Bogardus Holof Lyricist Award. Credits: Netflix’s *Wedding Season*, Eliza in Chicago’s *Hamilton*, Top 10 *Miss America* and Top 36 *American Idol*.

Emily Xu Hall (Music & Lyrics): Emily Xu Hall is an actor, composer, lyricist, and playwright. Her musicals center feminist narratives and meaningful roles for people of color. Awards include the Lilly Award, Jonathan Larson Award, and Dramatists Guild’s Stephen Schwartz Composer Award. Current projects include a modern adaptation of *The Cherry Orchard* and original musicals *Mei-Do* and *Nascent Phase*.

Joriah Kwamé (Music & Lyrics): Joriah Kwamé is most known for writing the viral song “Little Miss Perfect.” Projects include *Trolls Jr.* (Dreamworks), *Sinister* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *Little Miss Perfect* (Goodspeed Musicals). 2020 Johnny Mercer Songwriting Project. 2022-23 Dramatist Guild Foundation Musical Theatre Fellow. ASCAP Cole Porter Award, Harold Adamson Lyric Award.

Mark Sonnenblick (Music & Lyrics): Mark Sonnenblick is an Emmy and Drama Desk-nominated songwriter. Film: *Theater Camp*, *Spirited*, *Lyle Lyle Crocodile*. TV: *Harlem*, *Saturday Night Seder*, *Song of Parkland*. Theater: *Midnight at The Never Get*, *The Devil Wears Prada*. Jonathan Larson Grant and Harold Adamson Award winner.

Timothy Allen McDonald (Libretto): Timothy Allen McDonald is an acclaimed playwright, producer, entrepreneur, and educator. His notable credits include the librettos for *Willy Wonka* and *James and the Giant Peach*, both among the top ten most produced shows in schools, as well as *Between the Lines*, available for streaming on Broadway HD. As the Founder and CEO of iTheatrics, he adapts musicals for MTI’s Broadway Junior Collection and Concord’s Young Performers Editions, reaching an estimated annual audience of 36 million—three times that of Broadway. Tim is also the Founder and CEO of Junior Theater Festivals Worldwide, serving in-person audiences exceeding 20,000, and hailed by the *New York Times* as “a raucous, joyous, and celebratory event—a megachurch of theater!” He has received multiple awards for his contributions to theatre education and continues to inspire the next generation of artists through workshops and training programs.

Sara Wordsworth (Libretto): Sara Wordsworth is an award-winning musical writer with experience creating shows and content for Broadway, television, arenas, recordings, tours, concert, theaters, cruise ships and theme parks all around the world. Favorite credits include "In Transit," Broadway's 1st a cappella musical and numerous shows for Walt Disney Live Entertainment. www.SaraWordsworth.com

Bernard Waber (Author): Bernard Waber (September 27, 1921-May 16, 2013) was the author/illustrator of numerous children's books. He is best known for the Lyle the Crocodile series, which began in 1962 with *The House on East 88th Street*, which has been adapted for screen by both Columbia Pictures and HBO, and a nationally touring children's play. He is also known for *Ira Sleeps Over*, *Ira Says Goodbye* and *Courage*. Published after the attacks of September 11, 2001, *Courage* uses familiar scenarios to depict the meaning of bravery in terms children can see within themselves. Many of Waber's books such as *Do You See a Mouse?*, *Evie and Margie*, *An Anteater named Arthur*, and *A Lion Named Shirley Williamson*, focus on animals.

Nina Meehan (Director): Nina Meehan is an award-winning TYA director, playwright, and producer and a dedicated arts educator, with expertise in creativity and communication. Nina's theatrical work for young people has toured nationally and internationally. She has directed, produced, and commissioned over 60 new musicals for young people including: *Press Here* based on the NY Times Bestselling book 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.

Her work as a playwright includes the world-premiere adaptation of *Grumpy Monkey, the Musical* based on the books by Suzanne and Max Lang, which she also directed. Upcoming: *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom, the Musical*, *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 Dan Mertzluft, the *Kids Fight Evil Villain* Audio-Choose-Your-Own-Adventures musicals.

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*, *Los Angeles Times*, *American Theatre Magazine*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Barron's*, *Red Tricycle*, *ABC News*, *NBC News*, and *CBS News*.

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, Gloria Calderon Kellett, 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 Theatrical Production

Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile: The Musical

Written by Timothy Allen McDonald

Music & Lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul

Adapted from the Book by Bernard Weber

Directed by Nina Meehan

Venue: The Colony Theatre 555 N. 3rd. Street, Burbank, CA 91502.

Dates: February 15 - March 16, 2025

Tickets: Starting at \$34 (Everyone ages 2+ needs a ticket)
Member Price: 20% off
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 and Sundays - 10:00 AM, 1:00 PM

Ages: 5-12 year olds and their families