

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Alert for Theatre Editors, Reviewers and Calendar Listings

Chance Theater presents
“Next to Normal”

**The Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning powerhouse musical kicks off
Chance Theatre’s 24th Anniversary Season**

ANAHEIM, CA: Chance Theater, Anaheim’s official resident theater company, proudly presents the groundbreaking musical, “Next to Normal” as the first show in its 24th Anniversary Season. Directed by Matthew McCray with music direction by Stephen Hulse, “Next to Normal” will run January 28 - February 27, 2022 on the Cripe Stage at the Bette Aitken theater arts Center.

This groundbreaking smash hit musical won the Pulitzer Prize and three Tony Awards during its acclaimed run on Broadway. With a thrilling contemporary score, “Next to Normal” takes you behind the proverbial white picket fence to discover a family coming to terms with their past, bravely fighting to face their future, and striving to take care of themselves and each other. This emotional powerhouse of a musical is authentic, humorous, and unflinching. It will leave you breathless and full of hope.

Director Matthew McCray thinks stories about mental health need to be showcased more. “Mental illness is an ‘invisible illness’ and I think it’s important to bring these stories into focus. Not only for those who may have no experience on the subject, but also for those who struggle with it everyday to feel seen.”

McCray is excited about bringing “Next to Normal” to the Chance Theater’s intimate Cripe Stage at the Bette Aitken theater arts Center. “It’s been over a decade since ‘Next to Normal’ opened on Broadway, but the themes and story still resonate. Our production is staged in a small theater, so the intimate and personal nature of the story has more potential to penetrate.” He describes “Next to Normal” as “Challenging, unrelenting, and quirky. Plus, we are exploring some new stylistic approaches to some characters which depart from the model established over 10 years ago in the Broadway production.”

The world premiere of “Next to Normal” occurred in 2008, but the show’s origins stretch back to 1998, when writers Yorkey and Kitt were attending the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop. Yorkey brought an idea to Kitt about a woman undergoing electroshock therapy and the impact of that treatment upon her family. Over the next four years, Kitt and Yorkey kept expanding “Feeling Electric” until it became a full-length musical. This new show received a 2002 reading at the Village Theatre in Washington, followed by readings at several New York City venues with cast members that included Norbert Leo Butz. Significant changes were made during its Off-Broadway run, including the removal of the title song and more focus being put on Diana and her family’s struggles as they’re forced to face up to bitter truths.

The show officially opened on Broadway at the Booth Theatre on April 15, 2009. *The New York Times’* Ben Brantley called the Broadway staging “a brave, breathtaking musical. It is something much more than a feel-good musical: it is a feel-everything musical.” *Rolling Stone* called it “the best new musical of the season – by a mile.” The production racked up a total of 11 Tony Award nominations, winning for Best Original Score, Best Orchestration, and Alice Ripley for Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Musical. Just as exciting and gratifying was the next honor the show would receive – the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for Drama – only the eighth time in history that a musical garnered the award.

Joining director McCray and music director Hulse on the design team are scenic designer Joe Holbrook (“The Vandal”), lighting designer Matt Schleicher (“Skylight”), costume designer Christina Perez (“Edges”), sound designer Ryan Brodtkin (“The Story of My Life”), stage manager Wade Williamson (“Tigers Be Still”), and dramaturg Sophie Hall Cripe (“Ragtime”).

Starring in this production will be Chance Theater Resident Artist Jocelyn A. Brown (“The Last 5 Years”) as Diana, Tym Brown (Chance debut) as Dan, Jaylen Baham (Chance debut) as Gabe, Angie Chavez (Chance debut) as Natalie, Jared Machado (Chance debut) as Henry, and Ron Hastings (Ovation Award nominee for Lead Actor for 2020’s *Fun Home*) as Dr. Madden.

As with all other Chance productions, each performance will be followed by a discussion with members of the production team.

Chance Theater’s COVID-19 policy requires General Performance ticket holders to provide proof of full vaccination against COVID-19. Those without proof of being fully vaccinated -- must provide proof of a negative COVID-19 PCR test taken within 48 hours (2 days) prior to entering the theater. Masks are required at all times

for all patrons. Ticket holders who do not comply with these policies will not be admitted. Get the most up to date information about Chance Theater’s health and safety protocols at www.ChanceTheater.com/safety.

Chance Theater is thankful to Executive Producers Linda & Tod White for their support of this production, as well as our 2022 Season Producers Bette & Wylie Aitken, Associate Producers Susan Bowman & Freddie Greenfield and Laurie Smits Staude, and 2022 Associate Season Producers, The Family of Mary Kay Fyda-Mar.

To schedule press interviews, arrange for press comps, request press photos, or for any additional information regarding this production, please contact Managing Director Casey Long at (626) 523-7151 or casey@chancetheater.com.

ABOUT CHANCE THEATER

Proud to be one of the leading ensemble-driven theatre companies in Southern California, CHANCE THEATER has received the National Theatre Company grant from American Theatre Wing for “nurturing a community of artists in ways that strengthen and demonstrate the quality, diversity, and dynamism of American theatre.” The Chance recently won the Ovation Award for Best Production of a Musical (Intimate Theatre) for the intimate revival of *Fun Home*. Previously, Chance Theater has won seven Ovation Awards, including three for Best Production of a Musical (Intimate Theatre) for its regional premiere of *Lizzie, The Musical*, the West Coast premiere of *Triassic Park – The Musical*, and Southern California premiere of *Jerry Springer – The Opera*, as well as four LADCC Awards, including the Polly Warfield Award for Outstanding Season. The Anaheim City Council named Chance Theater “the Official Resident Theater Company of Anaheim” in 2014, and Arts Orange County has twice named the Chance as “Outstanding Arts Organization.” Known for using bold and personal storytelling to promote dialogue and connection within the Southern California theatrical landscape, the Chance is committed to contributing to a more compassionate, connected and creative community. As a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group, The Theatrical Producers League of Los Angeles, and OC Theatre Guild, Chance Theater continues to bring national attention to the Southern California and Orange County theater scenes.

CALENDAR LISTING

WHAT: Next to Normal

See the groundbreaking smash hit musical that won the Pulitzer Prize and three Tony Awards during its acclaimed run on Broadway. With a thrilling contemporary score, "Next to Normal" takes you behind the proverbial white picket fence to discover a family coming to terms with their past, bravely fighting to face their future, and striving to take care of themselves and each other. This emotional powerhouse of a musical is authentic, humorous, and unflinching. It will leave you breathless and full of hope.

NOTE: This show contains adult themes and language. It is recommended for mature audiences.

WHEN:

Previews: January 28 - February 4, 2022; Fri & Sat at 8 p.m., Sunday at 7 p.m.

Performances: February 5 - 27, 2022; Thu at 7:30 p.m.; Fri at 8 p.m.; Sat at 3 p.m. & 8 p.m.; Sun at 3 p.m.

** Chance Theater requires all general ticket holders to provide proof of full vaccination or a negative COVID-19 PCR test taken within 48 hours (2 days) prior to entering the theater. Masks are required at all times. For our "Vaccinated+ Performances," a negative COVID test will not be accepted. Check the website for a complete schedule.*

REVIEWERS and OTHER PRESS PERSONNEL are encouraged to attend:

Opening Performance on Saturday, February 5 at 8:00 p.m.

RUNNING TIME: 2 hours, 30 minutes with a 15-minute intermission

WHERE: Chance Theater @ Bette Aitken theater arts Center on the Cripe Stage

5522 E. La Palma Ave., Anaheim, CA 92807

TICKETS: \$25-\$49

Discounts available for children (ages 4-12), seniors, students, and military.

MORE INFO: www.ChanceTheater.com or call (888) 455-4212

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