



## NEWS RELEASE

**Contact:** Allison Rawlings  
Director of Communications  
(310) 966-2412  
allison@geffenplayhouse.com

### **GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES 2008/09 SEASON**

***Two World Premiere Productions***  
**“Time Stands Still” and “Nightmare Alley”**

***Two Pulitzer Prize Winning Playwrights***  
**Donald Margulies and Robert Schenkkan**

***The Completion of Hershey Felder’s Composer Sonata***  
**“Beethoven, As I Knew Him”**

**2008/09 Season Opens on August 27 and Closes on July 26**

**LOS ANGELES, April 15, 2008** — The Geffen Playhouse ushers in its 2008/09 season by bringing a host of new productions to the Los Angeles theater scene. This includes two world premiere productions – *Nightmare Alley* a brand new musical by singer/songwriter Jonathan Brielle, and *Time Stands Still*, a Geffen-commissioned project by Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Donald Margulies (the latter was originally titled *The Elephant in the Room*); a production of Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Robert Schenkkan’s new play *By the Waters of Babylon*; and *Beethoven as I Knew Him*, the triumphant conclusion of Hershey Felder’s musical trilogy. Written and directed by some of the top artists in the country, the Geffen’s 08/09 season boasts winners of the Ovation Award, the Pulitzer Prize, the Tony Award and the Emmy Award.

“With the discovery of *Nightmare Alley*, we found ourselves a tent-pole by which to design the rest of our theatrical year,” said Producing Director Gilbert Cates. “Bookended by two very different musicals, the season strikes a beautiful balance between life’s oddities, life’s realities and life’s beauties.”

With one final production still to be announced, the Geffen Playhouse 2008-2009 currently includes:

#### ***Beethoven, As I Knew Him***

Award-winning performer Hershey Felder returns to the Geffen Playhouse for *Beethoven, As I Knew Him*, the highly anticipated culmination of his musical trilogy. Felder brings the character of Ludwig van Beethoven to life through the eyes of Beethoven’s last surviving friend as well as through the eternal sounds of the maestro’s greatest musical works.

Felder, now world-famous for his lauded portrayals of George Gershwin, Fryderyk Chopin and Beethoven, returns to the Geffen after his sold-out run of *George Gershwin Alone* and *Monsieur*

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Gilbert Cates, Producing Director   Randall Arney, Artistic Director   Stephen Eich, Managing Director

Mailing Address: 10886 Le Conte Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024   P 310.208.6500   F 310.208.0341   www.geffenplayhouse.com

*Chopin* last summer. The productions received twelve LA Ovation Award nominations and won four awards, including *Best Musical* and *Best Lead Actor in a Musical*. The Geffen Playhouse also welcomes back award winning director Joel Zwick (*My Big Fat Greek Wedding*). Zwick, who helmed the productions of *George Gershwin Alone* and *Monsieur Chopin*, is currently directing the world-premiere production of *Beethoven, As I Knew Him*.

### ***By the Waters of Babylon***

The winner of the Pulitzer Prize for his epic work *The Kentucky Cycle*, playwright Robert Schenkkan joins forces with lauded local director Richard Seyd for the Los Angeles premiere of *By the Waters of Babylon*. A two-character play, this personal and touching romance takes place over the course of one afternoon as two relative strangers begin to learn the truth about themselves from the stories they reveal. Juxtaposing Cuban politics with Southern stoicism, *By the Waters of Babylon* intertwines storytelling, scenery and humor to show that in life, as in gardening, sometimes you need to clear away the weeds to make something more beautiful grow.

## **SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT**

### ***Hershey Felder as George Gershwin Alone***

After its limited run last season which left the audience literally shouting (and singing) for more, Hershey Felder celebrates the holidays in Los Angeles by bringing back one of America's most well-known composers. Performed and acclaimed all over the world, this Geffen Playhouse special engagement marks the final time Felder will perform this piece. Recreating key moments in George Gershwin's life through song and spoken word, this musical retelling features a look behind some of the composer's most famous works, including Felder's solo rendition of "A Rhapsody in Blue," and culminating with an interactive audience sing-a-long to their favorite Gershwin tunes. Winner of four Ovation awards including Best Musical and Best Lead Actor in a Musical, *George Gershwin Alone* is a wonderful evening for the whole family: It's got rhythm, it's got music – who could ask for anything more?

### ***Time Stands Still***

*Time Stands Still* (originally titled *The Elephant in the Room*) is a Geffen-commissioned World Premiere production. After multiple award-winning productions, Pulitzer Prize winner Donald Margulies (*Collected Stories, Dinner with Friends*) and Tony Award winner Daniel Sullivan (*Proof*) team up once again to give us a glimpse into the life of Sarah and James, a journalistic team and longtime couple. Recently reunited after a stint covering the turmoil in the middle east, the pair slowly find that their words and pictures are no longer a perfect match. Through humor, trauma and photographs that are worth a thousand words, *Time Stands Still* examines how a little shift in perspective can change an entire picture.

## ***Nightmare Alley***

Composer and musician Jonathan Brielle, a staple of New York's music and theater scene, brings the World Premiere of his new musical *Nightmare Alley* to the Geffen Playhouse. Helmed by Geffen Producing Director Gilbert Cates, *Nightmare Alley* explores the darker side of entertainment by taking us into the world of carnies, cons and clairvoyants. With a score as wild as a funhouse and as emotionally evocative as a beautiful tightrope walker, this new musical tells the story of shocks that await you inside the big tent. Based on the William Lindsay Gresham novel and subsequent cult-classic film, *Nightmare Alley* is a night at the theater full of special effects, wondrous feats and enough spirit to make believers of us all.

## **2008 – 2009 Season Chronology**

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<b>August 27 – October 12, 2008</b> (Previews begin August 19)	<b><i>Hershey Felder in Beethoven As I Knew Him</i></b> Music by Ludwig van Beethoven Text by Hershey Felder Directed by Joel Zwick
<b>November 5 – December 7, 2008</b> (Previews begin October 28)	<b><i>By the Waters of Babylon</i></b> Written by Robert Schenkkan Directed by Richard Seyd
<b>SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT</b> <b>December 19, 2008 – January 4, 2009</b>	<b><i>Hershey Felder as George Gershwin Alone</i></b> Music and Lyrics by George & Ira Gershwin Text by Hershey Felder Directed by Joel Zwick
<b>February 11 – March 15, 2009</b> (Previews begin February 3)	<b><i>Time Stands Still</i></b> Written by Donald Margulies Directed by Daniel Sullivan
<b>April 22 – May 24, 2009</b> (Previews begin April 14)	<b>TBD*</b> <i>*Play four will be announced at a later date</i>
<b>June 24 – July 26, 2009</b> (Previews begin June 16)	<b><i>Nightmare Alley</i></b> Book, Music & Lyrics by Jonathan Brielle Directed by Gilbert Cates

**EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:**

Geffen Playhouse  
10886 Le Conte Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90024  
310.208.5454  
[www.geffenplayhouse.com](http://www.geffenplayhouse.com)

**ABOUT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE**

The Geffen Playhouse has been a hub of the Los Angeles theater scene since opening its doors in 1995. Noted for its intimacy and celebrated for its eclectic mix of classic and contemporary plays, provocative new works and musicals, the Geffen continues to present a body of work that has garnered national recognition. Named in honor of entertainment mogul and philanthropist David Geffen, who made the initial donation to the theater, the company is headed by Producing Director and President of the Board Gilbert (Gil) Cates, Artistic Director Randall Arney, Managing Director Stephen Eich and Chairman of the Board Frank Mancuso. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen welcomes an audience of more than 130,000 each year, and maintains an extensive education and outreach program, designed to engage young people and the community at large in the arts. For more information, please visit **[geffenplayhouse.com](http://geffenplayhouse.com)**.