

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, PLEASE

LINCOLN CENTER THEATER
TO PRODUCE

“MCNEAL”
A NEW PLAY BY
AYAD AKHTAR
DIRECTED BY
BARTLETT SHER

STARRING
ACADEMY AWARD-WINNER
ROBERT DOWNEY JR.

PREVIEWS BEGIN THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5
OPENING NIGHT IS MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30
AT THE VIVIAN BEAUMONT THEATER

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This fall, Lincoln Center Theater (under the direction of André Bishop) has announced that it will produce *MCNEAL*, a new play by Ayad Akhtar, directed by Bartlett Sher. The production will star Academy Award-winner Robert Downey Jr. as Jacob McNeal, in his Broadway debut. *MCNEAL* will begin previews Thursday, September 5, and open on Monday, September 30. The first Broadway production of LCT’s 40th Anniversary season, *MCNEAL* will play a strictly limited engagement through Sunday, November 24 only at the Vivian Beaumont Theater (150 West 65 Street).

Good writers borrow, great writers steal. Jacob McNeal (Robert Downey Jr.) is a great writer, one of our greatest, a perpetual candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature. But McNeal also has an estranged son, a new novel, old axes to grind and an unhealthy fascination with Artificial Intelligence. Pulitzer Prize-winner Ayad Akhtar’s new play is a startling and wickedly smart examination of the inescapable humanity – and increasing inhumanity – of the stories we tell.

MCNEAL will have sets by Michael Yeargan & Jake Barton, costumes by Jennifer Moeller, lighting by Donald Holder, sound by Justin Ellington & Beth Lake, and projections by Jake Barton. Jennifer Rae Moore will be the stage manager. *MCNEAL* is produced by Lincoln Center Theater in association with Team Downey. Complete casting will be announced at a later date.

Tickets to *MCNEAL* will be available at the Lincoln Center Theater box office, at telecharge.com, or by visiting www.LCT.org beginning Tuesday, May 21 at 12noon ET. A limited number of tickets priced at \$35.50 (including fees) are available at every performance through LincTix, LCT’s program for 18 to 35-year-olds. For information and to enroll, visit LincTix.org.

AYAD AKHTAR is a novelist and playwright. His work has been published and performed in over two dozen languages. He is the winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the Edith Wharton Citation of Merit for Fiction, and an Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Akhtar is the author of *Homeland Elegies* (Little, Brown & Co.), “a masterpiece” (*Publisher’s Weekly*), “a tour de force” (*The Washington Post*), 10 Best Books of the Year from the *New York Times*. His first novel was *American Dervish* (Little, Brown & Co.), published in over 20 languages. As a playwright, his works at Lincoln Center Theater include *Junk* (Kennedy Prize

for American Drama, Tony Award nomination), *Disgraced* (also Broadway; Pulitzer Prize for Drama, Tony Award nomination) and *The Who & The What*. His other plays include *The Invisible Hand* (Obie Award; Olivier and Evening Standard nominations). Among other honors, Akhtar is the recipient of the Steinberg Playwriting Award, the Nestroy Award, the Erwin Piscator Award, as well as fellowships from the American Academy in Rome, MacDowell, the Sundance Institute and Yaddo, where he serves as a Board Director. In 2021, Akhtar was named the New York State Author, succeeding Colson Whitehead, by the New York State Writers Institute.

BARTLETT SHER is a Tony award-winner who has been described by *The New York Times* as one of America's "most original and exciting directors." His production of Aaron Sorkin's adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* on Broadway is the best-selling American play in Broadway history. He has been a resident director at Lincoln Center Theater since 2008, where his work includes *The Light in the Piazza*, *Awake and Sing!*, *South Pacific*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Golden Boy*, *The King & I*, the 2017 Tony-winning Best Play *Oslo*, *My Fair Lady* and *Camelot*, with a new book by Aaron Sorkin. His other works on Broadway and in the West End include *Pictures from Home*, *The Bridges of Madison County* and *Fiddler on the Roof*. His film of *Oslo* starring Ruth Wilson & Andrew Scott premiered on HBO in 2021 and was nominated for two Emmy Awards and won a Critics Choice Award. Sher is also a world-renowned opera director whose productions have been seen at the Metropolitan Opera and across Europe. This past season, Bart opened *Corruption* at Lincoln Center Theater, an original play with his longtime collaborator, writer JT Rogers.

ROBERT DOWNEY JR. is an Academy Award-winning actor who has captivated audiences with a remarkable career spanning several decades. His iconic portrayal of Iron Man/Tony Stark became the cornerstone of an unparalleled ten-year cinematic journey. Following his Marvel tenure, Downey turned his talents to creating original content through Team Downey, a production company he founded with his wife Susan in 2010, where he serves as a writer, producer, and actor. Most recently, Downey has appeared in Christopher Nolan's critically acclaimed feature *Oppenheimer* (Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor) and the HBO/A24 adaptation of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "The Sympathizer." Additionally, he is slated to appear in a Paramount Pictures' reimagining of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. With Team Downey, he has served as an executive producer for the Emmy-winning "Sweet Tooth" (Netflix) and the Emmy-nominated "Perry Mason" (HBO). Downey has produced and starred in "Downey's Dream Cars" (Max) and the Netflix documentary *Sr.*, a poignant tribute to his trailblazing father, Robert Downey Sr. (National Board of Review's Best Documentary Award); and has executive produced the four-part docuseries "The Bond" (Discovery+). Downey made his acting debut under the direction of Robert Downey Sr. in *Pound*. Since then, he has amassed over 110 acting credits including *Sherlock Holmes* (Golden Globe Award), *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, *Tropic Thunder* (Oscar, Golden Globe, BAFTA, SAG nominations) and Charlie Chaplin in Richard Attenborough's acclaimed *Chaplin* (BAFTA, London Film Critics' Circle awards; Oscar, Golden Globe noms). This year, Downey co-authored (with Thomas Kostigen) "Cool Food: Erasing Your Carbon Footprint One Bite at a Time" (*New York Times* bestseller). In addition to his film and television work, Downey was the executive producer for "The Sunshine Place" podcast (Deadline Club Award for Best Radio and Audio Investigative Reporting); partnered with Craig Dubitsky to launch "happy," an exciting new coffee brand committed to enhancing everyday life with a selection of 100 percent Arabica coffee; and is the founder of FootPrint Coalition (FPC), a business and non-profit solely focused on the adoption and scaling of sustainable technologies.

In addition to **MCNEAL**, Lincoln Center Theater's 40th Anniversary season will be announced soon.

MCNEAL is made possible in part by the generosity of Dasha Epstein in honor and admiration of Ayad Akhtar's work. This play is a recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award and evolved with support from the LCT Daryl Roth Play and Musical Theater Development Program. **MCNEAL** was commissioned by Lincoln Center Theater through the support of Laura Speyer and Josef Goodman.

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