

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, PLEASE

LINCOLN CENTER THEATER  
ANNOUNCES CASTING FOR ITS  
PRODUCTION OF

“MCNEAL”

A NEW PLAY BY  
AYAD AKHTAR  
DIRECTED BY  
BARTLETT SHER

CAST TO FEATURE  
ROBERT DOWNEY JR.  
BRITTANY BELLIZEARE  
RAFI GAVRON  
MELORA HARDIN  
ANDREA MARTIN  
RUTHIE ANN MILES  
SAISHA TALWAR

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

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Lincoln Center Theater (under the direction of André Bishop) has announced complete casting today for its production of *MCNEAL*, a new play by Ayad Akhtar, directed by Bartlett Sher. *McNEAL* will begin previews Thursday, September 5, and open on Monday, September 30. The first Broadway production of LCT’s 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season, *McNEAL* will play a strictly limited engagement through Sunday, November 24 only at the Vivian Beaumont Theater (150 West 65 Street).

The cast will feature Academy Award-winner Robert Downey Jr., Brittany Bellizeare, Rafi Gavron, Melora Hardin, Andrea Martin, Ruthie Ann Miles, and Saisha Talwar.

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.

AGBO, Anthony and Joe Russo’s independent studio, together with Robert Downey Jr., is unveiling a highly realistic Metahuman Digital Likeness of the actor that will be utilized within the production of *McNEAL*. This fall

at Lincoln Center Theater, audiences can expect a fusion of technology and theater, featuring Robert Downey Jr. in a new, innovative form.

Tickets to **McNEAL** are currently available at the Lincoln Center Theater box office, at telecharge.com, or by visiting [www.LCT.org](http://www.LCT.org). 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](http://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.

Lincoln Center Theater gratefully acknowledges Lynne and Richard Pasculano's visionary leadership support for **McNEAL**. **McNEAL** is made possible in part by the generosity of Aura, and by Dasha Epstein, whose gift is made in honor and admiration of Ayad Akhtar's work. This play is also supported by The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation and is a recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award. **McNEAL** evolved with support from the LCT Daryl Roth Play and Musical Theater Development Program and was commissioned through the generosity of Laura Speyer and Josef Goodman. 40th Anniversary Season support is provided by Denise Littlefield Sobel.

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#McNEALBway

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**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" (Emmy Award nomination). 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 the Emmy award-winning series "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.

**BRITTANY BELLIZEARE.** LCT: *Flex* (Lortel Award nomination for Outstanding Ensemble). Off-Broadway: *Scarlett Dreams*, *sandblasted* (Vineyard), *Fat Ham* (The Public), *RETREAT* (NBT). Other theater: *Create Dangerously* (Miami New Drama); *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, *The Bluest Eye* (Guthrie); *Wine in the Wilderness*, *King Hedley II*, *Seven Guitars* (Two River); *Romeo & Juliet* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); *The Magician's Daughter* (The Geva); *Skeleton Crew* (Baltimore Center Stage); *Sunset Baby* (TheaterWorks Hartford); *It's A Wonderful Life: A Radio Play*, *The Mountaintop* (Northern Stage); and *The Last Tiger In Haiti* (La Jolla/Berkeley Rep). TV: "The Equalizer," "American Rust," "The Blacklist," "Eye Candy," "The Knick." Film: *Honk for Jesus. Save Your Soul.*, *Everything Absolutely*. Education: MFA in Acting, The New School for Drama; BS in Mathematics, Spelman College. [www.brittanybellizeare.com](http://www.brittanybellizeare.com)

**RAFI GAVRON** is best known to audiences for his performance in the Warner Bros. Oscar-winning film *A Star is Born* for director Bradley Cooper opposite Cooper and Lady Gaga. He began his career in a breakout lead role in Anthony Minghella's film *Breaking and Entering* opposite Jude Law and Juliette Binoche. He earned a nomination for 'Best Newcomer' at the British Independent Film Awards. Next Gavron will star in Amazon/MGM's sci-fi thriller feature film, *Mery*, with Chris Pratt and Rebecca Ferguson. Recently, he starred in the Showtime and Paramount+ limited series "Ghosts of Beirut." Other recent television work includes two seasons of the 1960s crime drama, "Godfather of Harlem," opposite Oscar winner, Forest Whitaker; streaming on MGM+, Hulu's horror feature adaptation of Clive Barker's "Books of Blood" with Anna Friel and Britt Robertson; recurring on HBO's "Westworld," and Hulu's limited series "Catch 22" from producer/director George Clooney. Other recurring/guest roles include Amazon's "Homecoming" with Julia Roberts and Jeremy Allen White, and Starz's "Counterpart" alongside J.K. Simmons.

**MELORA HARDIN** is best known as the iconic Jan Levinson on "The Office." Additionally, she plays Trudy Monk on "Monk" and was nominated for an Emmy Award in 2016 for her role as Tammy on "Transparent." Hardin played Fantine in the sold-out Hollywood Bowl production of *Les Misérables* and starred on Broadway as Roxie Hart in *Chicago*. In 2021, she was a semi-finalist in the 30<sup>th</sup> Season of "Dancing with the Stars." Notable film credits include *Hannah Montana: The Movie*, *17 Again*, *27 Dresses* and *Absolute Power*. Recent television credits include "The Bold Type," "A Million Little Things," and "Mr. Monk's Last Case: A Monk Movie." Hardin has sung in films including Disney's *The Rocketeer* and *Tower of Terror* and has released three records available on Spotify. Her fine art and wallpaper designs can be viewed at [www.melora.com](http://www.melora.com).

**ANDREA MARTIN** won the Tony, Drama Desk, and Theatre World awards for her Broadway debut in *My Favorite Year* at Lincoln Center Theater and received the Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, Elliot Norton, and IRNE awards for her performance in *Pippin*. Additionally, at LCT, she appeared in Moss Hart's *Act One* (Outer Critics Circle Award). She has received Tony Award nominations for her performances in *Candide* (also Drama Desk Award nom), *Oklahoma!* (also Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle award noms), *Young Frankenstein* (also Drama Desk Award nom), and *Noises Off*. Her additional stage work includes the revival of *Exit the King* (Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle award noms), *A Christmas Carol*, and in her one-person play *Nude Nude Totally Nude* (Drama Desk Award nom). Martin received two Emmy Awards for writing and an Emmy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress in a Variety Series for her work on the legendary sketch comedy show "SCTV." She also received a special Emmy Award for her contributions on "Sesame Street." Her additional television

appearances include her own Showtime special “Andrea Martin: Together Again,” “Hairspray Live!,” “Modern Family,” “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt,” “30 Rock,” “The Good Fight” and “Harlem.” Following her simultaneous runs on the NBC comedy series “Great News” and the Hulu series “Difficult People,” Martin joined the cast of the Paramount+ series “Evil” (Critics Choice Award nom) and has been featured in the most recent season of the hit comedy series “Only Murders in the Building.” Martin's film appearances include *Cannibal Girls*, *Club Paradise*, *Stepping Out*, *All I Want for Christmas*, *Wag the Dog*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *All Over the Guy*, *Night at the Museum 3*, *Diane*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (SAG Award nom for Best Ensemble and People's Choice Award) and its sequels. She has been honored with a star on the Canada Walk of Fame and recently received the Canada’s Governor General’s Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement. Her critically acclaimed book *Lady Parts* was released by Harper Collins.

**RUTHIE ANN MILES.** LCT: *The King and I* (Tony Award, Grammy Award nomination; also London, Olivier Award nom). Broadway: *Sweeney Todd* (Tony nom), *Sunday in the Park with George* (also City Center Encores!). Other theater includes *Sondheim on Sondheim* (The Hollywood Bowl), *The Light in the Piazza* (City Center Encores!) and *Here Lies Love* (Theatre World Award, Lortel Award for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Musical). TV/Film includes Sherri Kinsky on “All Rise” (CBS, OWN) and *Over the Moon* (Netflix). Education: MA in Music, NYU Steinhardt.

**SAISHA TALWAR** is a recent graduate of the NYU Tisch Grad Acting Program. She is thrilled to be making her Broadway debut. IG: @saishatalwar

**LINCOLN CENTER THEATER**, now celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> season, is one of New York’s favorite not-for-profit theaters, with productions at Lincoln Center’s Vivian Beaumont, Mitzi E. Newhouse and Claire Tow theaters, and other theater on and off Broadway, as well as touring productions nationally and around the world, TV and film projects, and original cast recordings. In addition to **McNEAL**, LCT’s landmark 40<sup>th</sup> season includes the LCT3 production of *Six Characters*, a new play by Phillip Howze, directed by Dustin Wills, currently playing at the Claire Tow Theater; as well as the Broadway debut of *Floyd Collins*, with music and lyrics by Adam Guettel, and book and direction by Tina Landau which will begin performances Thursday, March 27 at the Vivian Beaumont Theater; *The Blood Quilt*, a play by Katori Hall, directed by Lileana Blain-Cruz which will begin performances Wednesday, October 30 and Henrik Ibsen’s *Ghosts*, featuring a new version by Mark O’Rowe, directed by Jack O’Brien which will begin performances Thursday, February 13 at the Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater; as well as an additional LCT3 production to be announced.

**TEAM DOWNEY** is an entertainment company founded by Susan Downey and Robert Downey Jr., known for producing innovative film, television, and digital content. Their recent credits include HBO’s “The Sympathizer,” Netflix’s Emmy Award-winning series “Sweet Tooth,” and the critically acclaimed documentary “Sr.” Team Downey is currently producing Amazon’s “Play Dirty,” Paramount’s *Vertigo* remake, and Netflix’s *Yucatán* and “A Head Full of Ghosts.” Previous work includes HBO’s “Perry Mason,” and the podcast series *The Sunshine Place*.

**AGBO.** Established in 2017 by acclaimed directors Anthony and Joe Russo, AGBO's mission is to propel the next era of storytelling by developing and producing universe-driven intellectual properties that span film, TV, gaming, and interactive media. AGBO blends physical and virtual production capabilities, fostering innovation in content creation across diverse platforms. Under this new framework, AGBO’s best-in-class technologists build proprietary creative tools for storytellers, enhancing production processes. In recent years, AGBO has achieved record-breaking success in both box office and streaming, setting new standards in entertainment with 11 number one global openings and over seven billion in box office revenue. In 2023, the daring “Everything Everywhere All at Once” won seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture, breaking records. Meanwhile, the “Citadel” franchise became Prime Video's second-most-watched show in history. On Netflix, the Anthony and Joe Russo-directed “The Gray Man” ranks as the platform's sixth most-watched film of all time, and the Chris Hemsworth-starrer “Extraction” has emerged as the platform's most successful franchise. AGBO is currently in post-production on the upcoming Russo-directed “The Electric State” for Netflix, an adaptation of the graphic novel of the same name, starring Millie Bobby Brown and Chris Pratt.