

THEATER

# LA's hidden gem- Fountain Theatre premieres its Outdoor Stage June 18

Tucked away in a quiet neighborhood is a hidden gem, one of the Los Angeles region's premiere regional live theatres

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By **Brody Levesque**



The Fountain Theatre Photo Credit: Google Earth screenshot

**EAST HOLLYWOOD** – Tucked away in a quiet neighborhood on Fountain Avenue just off Normandie Avenue is a hidden gem, one of the Los Angeles region's premiere regional live theatres. Founded in in 1990 by co-artistic directors Deborah Lawlor and Stephen Sachs the theatre has garnered an impressive resume and reputation in the theatre world for reflecting a unique cultural voice and serving the distinctive ethnic communities that make up the LA metroplex.

Over the past thirty-one years of its existence the theatre has staged over 35 world premieres; and also 31 U.S., West Coast, Southern California or Los Angeles premieres. On its website the Fountain points out that Fountain Theatre projects have been seen in New York City, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Seattle, Chicago, Massachusetts, Florida, New Jersey, Minneapolis, London and Edinburgh UK, among other cities and countries.

Like most of the region and certainly the entertainment world in LA, the House lights went dark at the Fountain as the coronavirus pandemic tore through Los Angeles and California. Undeterred, the artistic directors forged ahead and in January the theatre received approval from the City of Los Angeles to install a temporary outdoor stage for the purpose of presenting live performances and other events during the pandemic.

“Pandemic permitting, we hope to open our first outdoor production by late spring or early summer,” says Fountain artistic director Stephen Sachs. “We’re planning an exciting Los Angeles premiere that dramatizes urgent social issues using the Fountain’s signature bold and theatrical approach.”

For the past several months work has progressed in installing a stage in what is now the theater parking lot. The new performance area will be able to accommodate 50 to 84 audience members. It will feature seven rows of chairs, each six feet apart, as well as 12 high-top tables positioned six feet apart for use by patrons from the same “bubble” households. Every aspect of the outdoor performance area will meet COVID-19 safety guidelines.



Fountain Theatre Outdoor Stage Photo Credit: Lucy Pollak

The wait is now nearly over as the stage is complete and the final touches on the performance areas are being finalized. This past week the Fountain announced that casting is complete and rehearsals begin this week for the Los Angeles premiere of a radical, incendiary and subversively funny Obie award-winning play by MacArthur Foundation “Genius Grant” recipient, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, a playwright who identifies as a Black queer but whose plays aren’t chiefly about LGBTQ life.



*Playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins*

*Photo courtesy*

*John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation*

Performances of ‘An Octoroon’ will inaugurate the new outdoor stage at The Fountain Theatre on June 18. Performances run June 18 through Sept.19, with performances on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays at 7 p.m., except Saturday, June 19, which will be at 5 p.m. and will be followed by a special Juneteenth event, and July 30 through

Aug. 2 and Aug. 27 through Aug. 30 which will be dark.

*Playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins*

*Photo courtesy*

*John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation*

Four preview performances will take place on June 11, June 12, June 13 and June 16 at 7 p.m. There will be one press preview on Thursday, June 17 at 7 p.m. Tickets range from \$25–\$45; Pay-What-You-Want seating is available every Monday night in addition to regular seating (subject to availability).

The Fountain tells the Blade that it is proud to count L.A. City Councilmember Mitch O’Farrell, and Mayor Eric Garcetti as supporters, reflecting the company’s successful history of partnering with the City’s government.



Artist’s conception of finished and fully dressed out performance area of the Fountain Theatre

In addition to being a Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs grant recipient for decades, the Fountain launched a groundbreaking program that brings celebrity actors to L.A. City Hall to perform one-night free public readings in the City Council chambers.

The Fountain Theatre is located at 5060 Fountain Avenue (at Normandie) in Los Angeles. For reservations and information, call (323) 663-1525 or go to [www.FountainTheatre.com](http://www.FountainTheatre.com).