



**AMERICAN
STAGE**

**2026-2027 SEASON
A SEASON OF ICONS**

THE ICONIC SOUL—REBORN.

A NIGHT WITH
janis joplin

WRITTEN AND CREATED BY **RANDY JOHNSON**

DIRECTED BY **CÉLINE ROSENTHAL**

SEPT 16–OCT 11, 2026

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AMERICAN STAGE PRESENTS

A NIGHT WITH Janis Joplin

WRITTEN AND CREATED BY **RANDY JOHNSON**

DIRECTED BY **CÉLINE ROSENTHAL**

Originally produced on Broadway by Daniel Chilewich, Todd Gershwin and Michael Cohl.

A Night with Janis Joplin is presented by special arrangement with
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CAST

Laura Frye* (she/her).....	Janis Joplin
Syreeta S. Banks* (she/her).....	Joplinaire/Aretha Franklin/Etta James, Dance Captain
Delores McKenzie* (she/her).....	Joplinaire/Blues Singer/Chantel
Canela Vasquez (she/her).....	Joplinaire/Nina Simone/Chantel
Ariel Blue (she/her).....	Joplinaire/Odetta/Bessie Smith/Chantel
Ryan Joustra (she/her).....	Standby-Janis Joplin
Sabrina Hamilton (she/her).....	Swing-Joplinaire

BAND

Jason Tucker (he/him).....	Keys
Keith Meek (he/him).....	Guitar
Nico Remy (he/him).....	Drummer
Robert Baldrige (he/him).....	Trumpet

CREATIVE TEAM

Céline Rosenthal.....	Director
Jason Tucker (he/him).....	Music Director
Vanessa Russo* (she/her).....	Choreographer
Kristen Martino# (she/her).....	Scenic Designer
Ethan Vail (he/him).....	Lighting Designer
Wendell C. Carmichael (he/him).....	Costume Designer
Christopher Kinney (he/him).....	Sound Designer
Marcus Wehby (he/him).....	Props Designer
William San Giacomo (he/him).....	Master Electrician
Skylar Jay (she/her).....	Scenic Painter
Chloe Dipaola* (she/her).....	Stage Manager
Timon Brown (he/him).....	Director of Production
Thad Engle (he/him).....	Technical Director
Kylie Knickerbocker (she/her).....	Interim Costume Shop Manager
Leo Dougherty (he/him).....	Front of House Mixer/Stagecraft Fellow
Lucy Hart (she/her).....	Stage Management Fellow
Sarah Donnelly (she/her).....	Costume & Wardrobe Fellow

Members of the AEA are denoted with an asterisk (*)

Members of the United Scenic Artists Union are denoted with a pound sign (#)

Members of the The Stage Directors and Choreographers Society are denoted with a minus sign (-)



ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION

American Stage operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Mangers in the United States.



This season, American Stage presents *A Night with Janis Joplin*, a musical celebration of one of the most iconic and singular voices in American music. As a director, I'm drawn to artists who refuse to make themselves smaller—and Janis Joplin is one of the most striking examples of that kind of fearless expression.

Janis emerged in the 1960s with a sound and presence that defied expectation. At a time when women in popular music were often asked to be polished or restrained, she was raw, emotional, and unapologetically herself. Her voice didn't just carry power—it carried *need*—longing, joy, and pain. She once said she wanted to “feel as much as I can,” and it often feels as though we are watching her do exactly that in real time, inviting us to witness that discovery alongside her.

What makes Janis so remarkable to me is not just her talent, but her humanity. She was, in many ways, an outsider—someone searching for connection while navigating the intensity of sudden visibility. In one interview, she described the experience of performing for thousands of people and then going home alone—a stark reminder of the distance between being seen and being truly known. That tension between public persona and private

vulnerability is part of what gives her performances their urgency. You feel that something real is at stake.

Even in personal accounts from those closest to her, what emerges is not just the legend, but the person. Her family speaks of her with deep tenderness—as a loving, sensitive older sister who felt things intensely and gave of herself freely. That perspective reframes her not as a distant icon, but as someone achingly human.

A Night with Janis Joplin offers us a way into that complexity. The show weaves her music together with the voices of the artists who inspired her (Bessie Smith, Nina Simone, and Aretha Franklin) placing Janis within a larger lineage of women whose music reshaped the American sound. It becomes not just a celebration of her work, but a recognition of the tradition she both inherited and transformed.

In approaching this piece, I'm interested in holding both the exhilaration and the fragility of her presence—the thrill of watching someone fully inhabit their voice, and the vulnerability that comes with it. This is not about imitation; it's about capturing the spirit of an artist who insisted on being heard exactly as she was.

Why does her story matter now?

Because we are still asking many of the same questions Janis embodied: What does it mean to be fully seen? How much of ourselves are we willing to reveal? And what does it cost to live without apology?

Janis Joplin didn't just perform songs—she gave voice to something deeply personal and profoundly universal. That kind of honesty is rare—and it's what makes her story, and this piece of theatre, feel so vital.

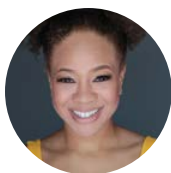
CAST



Laura Frye* (she/her; Janis Joplin) is psyched to return to this incredible show and make her American Stage debut! Recent credits include *A Night with Janis Joplin* (Florida Studio Theatre, Totem Pole Playhouse), *The Rocky Horror Show*, *The Perfect Mate* (Pittsburgh CLO), *Waitress* (Pittsburgh Musical Theatre), *Aspects of Love* (Media Theatre), and *Bright Star* (Broadway Theatre of Pitman). Laura holds a BA in Theatre and Music from Muhlenberg College and trained in physical theatre at the Accademia dell' Arte in Arezzo, Italy. She thanks her family for their endless support, her agents at FireStarter Entertainment, and the queen of rock 'n' roll herself, Janis Joplin, for always keeping it real.



Syreeta S. Banks* (she/her; Joplainaire/Aretha Franklin/Etta James, Dance Captain) is an accomplished singer, songwriter and actress from Sarasota, Florida who developed her love of performing as a small child singing in her great-grandparents' church choir and watching her mother perform in many local theatre productions. Her mezzo-soprano voice is influenced by the genres of gospel, soul, R&B, pop, rock and jazz and has been described as "Aretha Franklin-esque"; powerful and soulful. Syreeta has dazzled stages at Walt Disney World Resort, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines as well as many other regional venues and is a beloved performer at Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe in Sarasota, Florida. She gives thanks to her loving family for their support and gives all glory to God for her gifts of singing and storytelling!



Delores McKenzie* (she/her; Joplainaire/Blues Singer/Chantel) is thrilled to be back at American Stage for her third season! She was recently seen in the Cabaret Series as a producer and performer of *Black Girl Magic*, as the Stepmother in *Into the Woods*, and as Dionne in *Hair in the Park*. Delores is especially excited to return to American Stage for *A Night with Janis Joplin*—this show and this cast hold a very special place in her heart. She is grateful to continue sharing her love of music, theatre, and storytelling with the American Stage community. Follow Delores on Instagram: [@dee_tour](#)



Canela Vasquez (she/her; Joplainaire/Nina Simone/Chantel) is ecstatic to be making her American Stage debut and bringing the music of so many legends to life. She is a Sarasota, FL native and recent graduate of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, where she earned a B.A in Digital Communications and Multimedia Journalism. Some of her recent credits include *Confederates* (Luanne/ Jade) at West Coast Black Theatre Troupe and *For Colored Girls* (Lady in Green) at Studio@620. Other credits include: *Once on This Island* (Ensemble) at WBTT, *Beehive: The 60's Musical* (Jasmine) at Sarasota Players, and *Voices of Motown* (Ensemble) at Studio@620.



Ariel Blue (she/her; Joplaire/Odetta/Bessie Smith/Chantel) is an actor, writer, and recording artist who feels most at home under stage lights and behind a microphone. She's happy to be making her American Stage Debut. Ariel has performed internationally with Connelli Circus in Switzerland and is a familiar face at Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe (FL). Her stage credits include *Fences*, *The Apiary*, *Flyin' West*, *Sistas in the Name of Soul*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Dreamgirls*, *Avenue Q*, *The Wiz*, *A Motown Christmas*, and *The Amen Corner*. Ariel has produced three one-woman cabarets and has played with the brilliant minds at FST Improv. She was featured in *The Know Women Magazine* (2022) and received the Tampa Bay Women in Film & Theatre Award (2023). Offstage, she's likely reading, dreaming up her next project, or being the world's most devoted aunt.



Ryan Joustra (she/her; Standby-Janis Joplin) is a local performer, writer, and director here in the Tampa Bay area. Her most recent credits include: The Witch in *Into The Woods* (American Stage), Hermia in *Tales by Twilight: A Midwinter Night's Dream* (American Stage), *Dirty John's: Drag Queen Summer Camp* (Studio@620). Ryan is currently starting as an Artist in Residence for production and direction at the Studio@620. She has been a part of the musical, sketch comedy group Dirty John's for the last five years where she serves as a writer, director, and cast member. Ryan earned her B.A. from Berklee College of Music where she majored in Vocal Performance and Professional Music. She is so happy to be back at American Stage!



Sabrina Hamilton (she/her; Swing-Joplaire) is thrilled to be a part of her first mainstage production with American Stage! Although, you may have seen her at Boyd Hill nature preserve in *The Diaries of Adam and Eve* (Tales by Twilight Series). She is a graduate of the Pinellas County Center for the Arts program. "I want to thank God for the abundance of blessings and opportunities in my life. Mom. You are my biggest supporter. None of this is possible without you. I love you! Isaiah, I'm so sorry you had to listen to me sing Aretha Franklin for weeks and weeks...You're simply the best. And Kris-thank you for making sure I submitted my audition for this show.. and for being there every time I've doubted myself. You're my favorite kind of blessing."

BAND



Jason Tucker (he/him; Music Director, Keyboards) is pleased to be playing and singing on the ASTC stage. He was last seen playing as MC for last year's production of *100 Days*. Jason has been directing and music-directing for over 25 years all around the country and hopes to be doing so for another 25. He lives in Clearwater with his partner, Amanda - a writer - and his two favorite productions: *Mixon* and *Mercer*.



Keith Meek (he/him; Guitar) was raised in Lakeland, FL and studied Guitar Performance at the University of South Florida. Starting to play live shows at the age of 16, one of his first shows was just down the road at the late Local 662. His greatest influences include guitarists Mike Dawes, Marcin Patrzalek, and John Butler. Outside of playing guitar, he can also be found around Central Florida, playing tenor banjo at Irish trad sessions.



Nico Remy (he/him; Drums) is thrilled to make his American Stage debut, holds a Bachelor of Music from the University of South Florida, and brings over 18 years of percussive experience to the stage. He has spent the past decade as a drummer with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers drumline and has performed extensively in community and regional theater, including 10 years with MAD Theatre of Tampa, several productions with Eight O'Clock Theatre, and drum tracking for Mountain Theatre Company in North Carolina. Beyond the pit, Nico writes and performs original music with his indie bands, "bill." and "Leonardo Joseph," continuing to perform throughout Florida and across the country. When he is not behind the kit, he enjoys spending time with his dogs, Farrah and Coco Bean, and with his wife, Jenelle. Enjoy the show! IG: [@remy.wav](#)



Rob Baldridge (he/him; Trumpet), as a native of Pinellas County, began his musical journey by learning how to play the piano at age three. In elementary school, he picked the trumpet as his primary instrument. Rob is currently principal trumpet of the Tampa Bay Symphony, performs regularly with the St. Petersburg Opera Co. and is a member of the Florida Wind Band. He has also been the trumpet player for American Stage in the Park since 2024. Rob is also a music conservatory teacher at Berkeley Preparatory School in Tampa and teaches private lessons to many students in and around the Tampa Bay area.

CREATIVE TEAM



Céline Rosenthal (Director) is a Tony®-nominated producer and award-winning director. They served seven seasons as Associate Artistic Director at Asolo Rep and developed work with New Dramatists, Musical Theatre Factory, and South Carolina New Play Festival. Select theatre credits include *Dial M for Murder* (Pittsburgh Public/Asolo Rep), *My Favorite Sophomore* (CATF), *Grand Horizons*, *The Lifespan of a Fact*, *Camelot* (Asolo Rep), *Jennifer Who Is Leaving* (Urbanite), *The Adventure of Life* (Warehouse Theatre/Chisenhale London/Bigvision NYC), and *When We Were Young and Unafraid* (Studio Theatre TDS). Select film directing credits include *Wildflower*, *Getting Off*, and *Musings*. Céline was Script Supervisor on *Operation Fast Link* (Bill Camp, Roman Griffin Davis), *Study for a Large Painting* (Saul Rubinek), *Distant Twilights*, *JewFace*, and *Her Longest Way Back Home*; shadowed on CBS's *Cupertino*; and served as Assistant Director on Xfinity/NBCUniversal's *Best in Class*, *Heritage*, *Zenith*, and *Notes from El Barrio*, among others. This one's for you, Mr. Price. <3



Vanessa Russo* (she/her; Choreographer)

Billy Elliot (National Tour), *Billy Elliot* (Amsterdam, Netherlands), *Billy Elliot* (Munich, North Shore Theatre & Fulton Theatre), *West Side Story* (Asian/European Tour), *Oklahoma* (National Tour), *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*, Broadway Dance Lab with Josh Prince, St. Pete Opera's *Kiss Me, Kate*, *Merry Widow*, *Samson and Delilah*, *Alcina*, *Rigoletto*, *Semele*, *Soldier's Tale*, *Don Giovanni*, *Tales of Hoffman*, *Holiday Sparkle*). Feature Film: (*Across The Universe*). Choreographed for: *Musings The Musical* (Film), St. Pete Opera, Venice Theatre, Mountain Theater Company, MPAC, Sarasota Players & CANDance



Kristen Martino# (she/her; Scenic Designer) has had her work

as a scenic designer seen on stages across the country, including productions at Drury Lane Theatre, Gulfshore Playhouse, ACT of CT, The Cape Playhouse, and Indiana University, where she completed her MFA in Scenic Design. Kristen began her career in Chicago, where she worked as a freelance and associate scenic designer. Kristen was also part of the team selected to represent the United States by designing the Emerging Artist Exhibit for the 2019 Prague Quadrennial and the recipient of the 2022 USITT Rising Star Award. Kristen is a proud member of United Scenic Artist Local 829. In addition to her professional design work, Kristen is dedicated to arts education. She currently serves as Head of Scenic Design at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she mentors the next generation of theatre artists and is a company member at the Clarence Brown Theatre, a LORT theatre on campus.
www.kristenmartino.com @kristenmartino.design



Ethan Vail (he/him; Lighting Designer) is pleased to be making

his American Stage debut. Credits include-Urbanite Theatre: *Spaceman*, *No One is Forgotten*, *Westminster*, *That Must Be the Entrance to Heaven*, *At the Wake of a Dead Drag Queen*; The Sarasota Players: *Cabaret*, *Head Over Heels*, *Little Shop of Horrors*; Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe: *Ruby*, *Dreamgirls*, *Broadway in Black*; Asolo Repertory Theatre: *Grand Horizons*, *Fannie: The Music and Life of Fannie Lou Hamer*, *Camelot*; Significant Productions located at the Villages: *Next to Normal*, *Angel Street*; Manatee Players: *Parade*. He was the 2013 recipient of the U.S. Institute for Theatre Technology's Young Designers Managers & Technicians Award, sponsored by Barbizon Lighting Company, for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a production he designed for Purdue University. He is also the Production Manager and Resident Lighting Designer for the Sarasota Ballet. His work with the ballet has been seen internationally including at the Royal Opera House in London.



Wendell C. Carmichael (he/him; Costume Designer) is an LA-based Costume Designer/educator with previous design credits at American Stage Theatre, Center Theatre Group - Mark Taper, Kirk Douglas, Laguna Playhouse, Geffen Playhouse, Ebony Repertory Theatre Company, Collaborative Artist Bloc, Lobby Theatre, Antaeus Theatre Company, Boston

Court Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Rogue Machine, Rogue Machine Theatre, Matrix Theatre, Southcoast Repertory Theatre, La Mirada Theatre, Warehouse Theatre, Skylight Theatre Company, Lower Depth Theatre, Chance Theater Company, Theatre Rhinoceros, and others. University and Colleges APU, USC, UCLA, University of Pomona, Chapman College and University of Lavern productions: Three time LA Critic's Choice nominee, 2023 and 2018 Stage Raw winner - Costume Design. Three-time L.A. Ovation Award nominee. 2017 Orange County's Best Costume Designs. 2015 NAACP Theatre Award winner. Member of Local 768. His work can be viewed on social media @WynningzbyWyndell.



Christopher Kinney (he/him; Sound Designer) is excited to sound design for *A Night with Janis Joplin*. You may have last seen him in *Beach, Please!* for American Stage's Summer Cabaret Series or at local gigs around St. Petersburg and the Tampa Bay area. His last theatre credit was Shaun (Swing) in *Hundred Days* with American Stage. He has dedicated most of

his career to music education, songwriting, and playing live music in local rock band ADB. You can find his solo music as Topher Kinney wherever you stream music. He's also a dedicated martial artist and a part of Kinney Karate with a goal of making athletics and martial arts fun and accessible.



Marcus Webby (he/him; Props Master) is thrilled to return as Props Master for *A Night With Janis Joplin* this season, and to collaborate with a cast and crew he truly values. With over 25 years of professional experience, Marcus brings a steady hand, clear communication, and deep organizational expertise to every production. His background includes works ranging

from *Hamlet* to large-scale dance and musical productions, and he is passionate about supporting artists, and he is passionate about supporting artists and creating a smooth, focused rehearsal and performance process.



Skylar Jay (she/her; Scenic Painter) has been working as a scenic artist for just over three years now. In her tenure, she's led projects for Stageworks (*Poirot Returns*, *I Am My Own Wife*, *Falsettos*, *The Great American Trailer Park Christmas Musical*, *When the Righteous Triumph*, *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*, *My Name is Asher Lev*, *The Meeting*, *I Love You You're Perfect Now*

Change), American Stage (*Into the Woods*, *Hot Wing King*, *A Night With Janis Joplin*), and Jobsite (*Twelfth Night*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *The Smuggler*, *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Thrice to Mine*, *POTUS*, *Gorey Stories*, *Macbeth*, *The Pillowman*, *The Butterfly's Evil Spell*, *PUFFS*, *Ghost Brothers of Darkland County*). When she's not painting or cataloging the expanses of the Pacific Northwest, she's also an aspiring writer. You can find more of her work and more about her by visiting her website, skylarjayart.com, or by following her on Instagram @accepted_value.



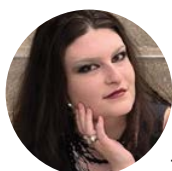
Chloe Dipaola* (she/her; Production Stage Manager) has been an active part of American Stage since the 2022 season. As a Production Stage Manager, her credits here include shows such as *American Idiot*, *Ragtime in the Park*, *Indecent*, *Beauty and the Beast in the Park*, *Ring of Fire*, *The Mountaintop*, *Hair in the Park*, *Fat Ham*, *The Good Peaches*, *Hundred Days*, *Hot Wing King*, *Into the Woods in the Park*. Based in the vibrant theater communities of Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Sarasota, Chloe is known for her dedication and the heart she brings to every production. To continue American Stage's 49th season she sends huge thanks to her friends, family, cast, crew, and everyone who keeps the blues alive. Email: chloedipaola@gmail.com



Leo Dougherty (he/him; Front of House Mixer/Stagecraft Fellow) is happy to be working on his first show with American Stage as the Sound Engineer and Stagecraft Fellow. Leo's previous experience includes attending St. Pete College working on countless shows with them. He has also worked for Busch Gardens Tampa for the past 2 years.



Lucy Hart (she/her; Stage Management Fellow) is thrilled to be the Stage Management fellow for American Stages 2026/27 season. She recently graduated with a degree in Technical Theatre Arts and *A Night With Janis Joplin* is her first professional theatre show. She is thrilled to be working with such an amazing team.



Sarah Donnelly (she/her; Costume and Wardrobe Fellow) is a Columbia College Chicago Graduate with a Degree In Fashion design. After graduating, she has focused on freelance costume construction for performers around the Chicagoland area. She is very excited to be joining the American Stage Team in bringing Janis Joplin to Life. For inquiries and portfolio work, you can reach her via email at awlgoodthings@gmail.com.



SONG CREDITS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Randy Johnson is a Broadway Director and published playwright. He made his Broadway debut as a playwright – director with Tony Award nominated musical *A Night With Janis Joplin* at the Lyceum Theatre. He is a graduate of the USC School of Dramatic Arts in Los Angeles. He has produced, directed and written some of the most diverse, enduring, groundbreaking and landmark events on the world stage. His work has been seen on Broadway,

Off Broadway, regional theatres across the United States and Canada, London's West End, Radio City Music Hall, Madison Square Garden, Carnegie Hall, The Grand Ole Opry and the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Wembley Arena and O2 arena in the United Kingdom, The Universal Amphitheater in Los Angeles and L'Olympia in Paris. Most recent nomination for excellence in theatre is the 2019 NAACP THEATRE AWARDS - BEST DIRECTOR OF A MUSICAL for *Shout Sister Shout* at the PASADENA PLAYHOUSE. This is his second NAACP nomination for his work. For the 2014 NAACP THEATRE AWARDS - was a best Best Director Nominee for his work on *A Night With Janis Joplin*. He is a recipient of "THE CRYSTAL APPLE AWARD" for his work with Aids Project Los Angeles, and received the 'VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR' for his work with *La Shanti*. He was named Best Director by DC Theatre Scene for his work on *Smokey Joe's Cafe* at Arena Stage. Broadway World Awards: New York City, Washington DC, Cleveland, Austin, San Jose, Milwaukee. Portland, Raleigh, and Pasadena for which he was nominated Best Director. Randy is a member of the SDC - Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, The Dramatists Guild and Canadian Actors Equity (Directing Division). Agency Contact - ABRAMS ARTISTS AGENCY, NEW YORK



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