

# THE SHED

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 12, 2026

## ANNOUNCING 4-WEEK PRESENTATION ENGAGEMENT

# IMITATION OF LIFE

A NEW MUSICAL

BY LYNN NOTTAGE & JOHN LEGEND

DIRECTED BY LIESL TOMMY

TO PREMIERE AT THE SHED THIS FALL

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(New York, NY) **IMITATION OF LIFE**, a new musical with a book by Pulitzer Prize winner **Lynn Nottage**, music and lyrics by Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony Award winner **John Legend**, and directed by multi-award-winning and Tony Award nominated **Liesl Tommy** will premiere at **The Shed** (Meredith “Max” Hodges, Chief Executive Officer; Alex Poots, Artistic Director) as a co-production with **National Black Theatre** (Sade Lythcott, Chief Executive Officer; Jonathan McCrory, Executive Artistic Director) in New York City for a strictly limited 4-week presentation engagement.

Based on the novel by Fannie Hurst and the Universal Pictures films, performances at The Griffin Theater at The Shed will begin in Fall 2026.

Additional details including casting, design and creative team members, ticket on-sale information, dates and more will be announced at a later date.

**National Black Theatre, John Legend and Mike Jackson of Get Lifted Film Co., Crocodile Eyes, Universal Theatrical Group (UTG), Sue Wagner, John Johnson, Mickey Liddell and Pete Shilaimon of LD Entertainment** and **The Shed** serve as producers.

**Lynn Nottage, John Legend** and **Liesl Tommy** jointly said today: “Originally published in 1933, novelist Fannie Hurst’s *Imitation of Life* tells the story of two women, one Black and one white, struggling to raise their daughters in a world shaped by inequalities. While the novel’s narrative is very much a product of its time, its themes of race, class, and gender in America continue to resonate today. As artists, we are drawn to *Imitation of Life*’s enduring emotional power and its potential to be reimaged in ways that feel both contemporary and urgent. It has been a profound joy to collaborate on bringing this story to the stage, and we are thrilled to premiere this musical at The Shed, where we look forward to sharing the beautiful and deeply moving journey of Delilah and Peola Johnston with audiences.”

*Inspired by the 1933 best-selling novel by Fannie Hurst and the beloved 1934 and 1959 Universal films, Imitation of Life follows two single mothers, one Black and one White, as well as their daughters, who build a shared life while each strives for success and love in a society divided by race and class. Set across the vibrant backdrop of 1920s Atlantic City*

and 1930s New York, this new, profoundly moving musical explores themes of identity, the American Dream, and what we leave for future generations.

For more information visit [theshed.org/imitationoflife](https://theshed.org/imitationoflife).

The novel *Imitation of Life* by Fannie Hurst was originally published in 1933. Universal Pictures produced two film adaptations based on the book: in 1934 directed by John Stahl, starring Claudette Colbert and Louise Beavers; and in 1959 directed by Douglas Sirk, starring Lana Turner and Juanita Moore. The 1934 film is included in the U.S. National Film Registry of The Library of Congress for its “cultural, historical and aesthetic significance.” It was nominated for the 1934 Academy Award for Best Picture. The 1959 film was nominated for two Academy Awards (Best Actress, Juanita Moore and Best Supporting Actress, Susan Kohner).

#### BIOS

**LYNN NOTTAGE** (*Book*) is a playwright and screenwriter, and the first woman in history to receive two Pulitzer Prizes for Drama. Among the most produced playwrights of her generation, her work has been staged extensively throughout the United States and internationally, earning Tony Award nominations, an Olivier nomination, an Evening Standard award, and numerous other awards. Her recent projects include the libretto for *This House*, premiered at Opera Theatre of St. Louis, co-written with Ruby Aiyo Gerber with music by Ricky Ian Gordon (Finalist for the 2025 International Opera Awards); the opera adaptation of *Intimate Apparel* at Lincoln Center Theater; the book for the Tony-nominated Broadway musical *MJ*; and *Clyde's*, produced on Broadway and at Second Stage Theater. She has also co-curated immersive performance installations, including *This Is Reading* and *The Watering Hole* at Signature Theatre. Nottage's acclaimed body of work includes *Sweat* and *Ruined* (Pulitzer Prizes), *Mlima's Tale*, *By the Way*, *Meet Vera Stark*, *Fabulation*, *Crumbs From the Table of Joy*, and *The Secret Life of Bees*. For television, she served as Writer/Producer on “She's Gotta Have It” and Consulting Producer on “Dickinson.” Her honors include the PEN/Laura Pels Master Dramatist Award, Doris Duke Artist Award, MacArthur Fellowship, Guggenheim Fellowship, and induction into the Theater Hall of Fame. She is a Professor at Columbia University School of the Arts and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

**JOHN LEGEND** (*Music & Lyrics*). John Legend is an EGOT-winning, critically acclaimed, multiplatinum musician who has garnered 13 Grammy Awards, an Academy Award, a Golden Globe Award, a Tony Award and three Emmy Awards, among others. Legend is one of only twenty-two people in the prestigious EGOT club. Legend has released ten celebrated albums over the course of his career, including *Get Lifted* (2004), *Once Again* (2006), *Evolver* (2008), *Wake Up! (with The Roots, 2010)* *Love in the Future* (2013), *Darkness and Light* (2016), *A Legendary Christmas Deluxe* (2019), *Bigger Love* (2020), *LEGEND* (2022), *LEGEND (Solo Piano Version)* (2023) and most recently, *My Favorite Dream* (2024). On November 22, Legend released the 20th anniversary digital deluxe version of his Grammy winning debut album, *Get Lifted*, featuring artists including Tems, Simi, Killer Mike, and Lil Wayne. Legend kicked off his “Get Lifted 20th Anniversary World Tour” in May where he is bringing his acclaimed debut album back to the stage around the world. Legend's influence extends to live performance, including his recent An Evening with John Legend: A Night of Songs and Stories tour in 2024. On screen, he delivered a stunning performance as Jesus in NBC's *Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert* (2018), earning an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Lead Actor and winning an Emmy as a producer for *Outstanding Variety Special (Live)*. Legend joined *THE VOICE* as a coach for Season 16 (2019) and has returned for a number of seasons, most recently completing Season 27 (2025). Beyond music, Legend is a visionary producer and storyteller. Alongside partners Mike Jackson and Ty Stiklorius, he co-founded Get Lifted Film Co., which has created a wide range of acclaimed projects across major networks and streaming platforms. Recent highlights include the Emmy-winning HBO documentary *1000% Me: Growing Up Mixed*, Paramount+'s *Loudmouth*, and Netflix's hit series *Rhythm & Flow*. Upcoming projects include NBC/Peacock's *Before I Let Go*, inspired by Kennedy Ryan's best-selling novel; *The War & Treaty*, based on the lives of Black country music stars Michael and Tanya Trotter; and the Broadway-bound musical *Soul Train*. Get Lifted's storytelling expertise also extends to books through their publishing arm, Get Lifted Books, which amplifies diverse voices, most recently with Dr. Rae Wynn-Grant's

memoir, *Wild Life*, and Candace Parker's book, *The Can-Do Mindset*. Expanding his entrepreneurial footprint, Legend launched his self-care brand, *Loved01*, in 2023, to bring consumers gentle but powerful skincare formulas at affordable prices. In 2024, he and his wife, Chrissy Teigen, introduced *Kismet*, a dog lifestyle brand offering premium food and accessories for modern dog families, which is available online and at Chewy.com. As an advocate for social justice,

Legend founded FREEAMERICA in 2014 to transform the conversation around criminal justice policies and combat mass incarceration. He also serves on the boards of Harlem Village Academies and Management Leadership for Tomorrow, as well as advisory boards for The Quattrone Center for the Fair Administration of Justice and Teach for All. John Legend's career is a testament to his unwavering commitment to excellence, creativity, and justice. Whether through his music, storytelling, activism, or entrepreneurship, Legend continues to inspire and leave an indelible mark on the world.

**LIESL TOMMY** (*Director*) is a multi-award-winning director and producer of theater, television and film. She is the first Black woman ever nominated for a Tony Award® for Best Direction of a Play for *Eclipsed* by Danai Gurira, starring Lupita Nyong'o. She has directed over 50 global-wide stage productions, from Shakespeare to world premieres of plays and musicals, including the world premiere of the John Kander/Greg Pierce musical *Kid Victory*. For both the first stage adaptation of *Frozen* (Disneyland's multimedia extravaganza) and her juggernaut production of *Les Misérables* for Dallas Theater Centre, she made the groundbreaking choice to center people of color, forever influencing future productions. She has won, in addition to many other honors for directing, an Obie award and a Lucille Lortell Award. Liesl made her feature directorial debut with the acclaimed MGM film *Respect*, based on the life of Aretha Franklin, starring Jennifer Hudson. Tommy's television credits include "Queen Sugar," "Insecure," "Mrs. Fletcher," "Dietland," "Jessica Jones," and "The Walking Dead." Liesl's childhood in Apartheid-era South Africa has deeply influenced her passion for stories about pursuing personal and cultural freedom, propelling her to launch her production company Crocodile Eyes with co-producer Jennifer Mudge in 2020.

**NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE** (*Producer*). Founded in 1968 by visionary artist Dr. Barbara Ann Teer, National Black Theatre (NBT) is a Tony-nominated cultural institution with a pioneering legacy in American theatre and a national reputation for producing bold new work by Black artists. In 2023, NBT made Broadway history with the transfer and co-production of James Ijames's Pulitzer Prize-winning and Tony-nominated *Fat Ham*, becoming only the third Black theatre company to bring a production from Off Broadway to Broadway. The following season, NBT produced the Tony Award-winning revival of Ossie Davis's *Purlie Victorious*, marking its first Tony-winning Broadway production. Across its history, NBT has collaborated with and championed transformative artists from James Baldwin, Maya Angelou and Ruby Dee to contemporary visionaries including Nona Hendryx and Bill T. Jones, while also helping launch the careers of influential voices such as Dominique Morisseau. NBT has invested more than \$10 million in over 350 original works by Black artists and has earned major industry recognition including an Emmy nomination; multiple *New York Times* Critics' Picks; and Obie, Lucille Lortel, Audelco, and Drama Desk honors. Its legacy is preserved within the permanent collections of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture and the National Portrait Gallery. Under the leadership of Chief Executive Officer Sade Lythcott and Executive Artistic Director Jonathan McCrory, NBT continues to expand its national presence on and off Broadway while building a major new cultural arts center in Harlem at 125th Street and 5th Avenue.

**GET LIFTED FILM CO.** (*Producer*) is led by Emmy® and Tony® Award-winning producer Mike Jackson, EGOT recipient John Legend, and Emmy® Award-winner and CEO of Friends At Work, Ty Stiklorius. Their work spans film, television, theatre, and book publishing, with recent highlights including the Emmy Award-winning documentaries *1000% Me: Growing Up Mixed* (HBO) and *Stand Up and Shout* (Max), the acclaimed documentary *Loudmouth*, and Netflix's musical reality competition series "Rhythm & Flow." Notable credits also include the films *La La Land* and *Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey*, NBC's *Jesus Christ Superstar Live In Concert*, and the Tony® Award-winning revival of *Jitney*.

**CROCODILE EYES** (*Producer*) is a New York-based independent production company founded by Liesl Tommy and Jennifer Mudge. Following more than two decades of distinguished individual careers—as director and actor—spanning Broadway (Tony Award nomination), Off-Broadway (Obie Award; Drama Desk and Lucille Lortel nominations), the West End (box-office record at the Playhouse Theatre), as well as film and television (Peabody Award), the two artists joined forces to establish a company devoted to artist-driven, socially engaged storytelling. The company launched with high-profile benefit initiatives for Broadway for Biden and the New York Civil Liberties Union, raising nearly one million dollars in support of causes central to their values. Theatre projects include the critically acclaimed European premiere of *Passing Strange* at the Young Vic (Summer 2024); *The Rwanda Project*, in partnership with London-based producer Ryan Hugh Mackey and 2023 Olivier Award winner Mervyn Millar; and the forthcoming premiere of Stephen Belber's *What Do We Do With the Dead*, with Tectonic Theater Project. Film projects in development include a collaboration with Academy Award-winning writer Alex Dinolaris and Andrea Ciannavei, as well as Liesl Tommy's original

feminist horror film trilogy. Television projects include titles with Emmy nominee Laura Eason and Ryan Coogler's Proximity Media. The company has also developed projects for Disney+ and Sister Pictures.

**UNIVERSAL THEATRICAL GROUP** (*Producer*) is the live theatre division of the world-famous motion picture studio, Universal Pictures. UTG, which also oversees DreamWorks Theatricals, is represented by the record-breaking musical phenomenon *Wicked*, currently in its twenty-first smash-hit year on Broadway. *Wicked* has been seen by over 60 million people worldwide, making it one of the most successful theatrical ventures of all time. In 2008, Universal's musical adaptation of *Billy Elliot* opened on Broadway, going on to win ten Tony Awards including Best Musical. Universal also produced the Tony-nominated Broadway production of *Bring It On: The Musical*, along with Irving Berlin's *Holiday Inn* with Roundabout Theatre Company. In 2016, DreamWorks Theatricals was formed under UTG to develop live entertainment inspired by the studio's acclaimed library of animated films, including the Tony-winning musical adaptation of *Shrek* and the hit West End production of *The Prince of Egypt*. UTG's newest addition to their Broadway lineup, *Death Becomes Her*, is now running at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre on Broadway. UTG is overseen by Jimmy Horowitz (Chairman of Business Affairs and Operations, NBCUniversal), and led by Lowe Cunningham (Senior Vice President, Head of Creative and Strategy, Universal Theatrical Group).

**SUE WAGNER** (*Producer*) has produced over 60 Broadway, Off-Broadway, Touring and West End musicals including the most Tony Award nominated play of all time, *Stereophonic*, the record breaking, history making play, *Good Night & Good Luck* starring George Clooney, and Kimberly Belflower's culturally redefining *John Proctor is the Villain*. Other career highlights include: *Oedipus*, *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*, *Mike Birbiglia: The Old Man And The Pool*, *The Lehman Trilogy*, Stephen Sondheim's *Here We Are*, *Ain't No Mo*, *Danny & The Deep Blue Sea*, *Passing Strange*, *The Big Gay Jamboree*, *Hold On To Me Darling*, *Eureka Day*, Andrew Scott *Vanya* and the upcoming productions of *Dog Day Afternoon* and *Dreamgirls*. Co-founded WJP a Broadway producing, management and live events company with her partner John Johnson and together they have received nine Tony Awards.

**JOHN JOHNSON** (*Producer*). Nine-time Tony Award-winning producer who has worked on over 60 Broadway productions including *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*; *A Gentleman's Guide to Love & Murder*; *A Raisin in the Sun*; *A View From the Bridge*; *Skylight*; *The Humans*; *Hello, Dolly!*; *The Lehman Trilogy*; and the most Tony nominated play of all time, *Stereophonic*. Other highlights include *Good Night, and Good Luck* (the highest grossing Broadway play of all time), *John Proctor Is The Villain* (a play that "ignited its own cultural moment") and *To Kill A Mockingbird* at Madison Square Garden (the only Broadway production to play the World's Most Famous Arena). This Season: *Oedipus*; *All Out* (Broadway); *Stereophonic* (National Tour), *John Proctor Is The Villain* (The Royal Court). Next Season: *Dreamgirls*. Graduate and professor: Fordham University at Lincoln Center. Co-founder of WJP, a Broadway producing, management and live events company. @WJPLive

**LD ENTERTAINMENT** (*Producer*) is an independent studio that finances and produces elevated, cutting-edge films, television, and live theatrical productions. Led by Mickey Liddell and Pete Shilaimon, the company has produced over forty feature films, including Academy Award-nominated titles *Judy*, *Jackie*, *Albert Nobbs*, and *Beautiful*, as well as fan favorites like *Anthropoid*, *Ben Is Back*, *Megan Leavey*, *I Can Only Imagine*, *Risen*, *The Grey*, and *Forever My Girl*. Upcoming and recent projects include *Switzerland*, directed by Anton Corbijn and starring Helen Mirren, Alden Ehrenreich, and Olivia Cooke, Sean Byrne's *Dangerous Animals*, Mercedes Bryce Morgan's *Bone Lake*, and the documentaries *Sugar Babies* and *The Last Guest of the Holloway Motel*. LD also continues to support breakout talent with films like *National Anthem*, *High Tide*, *Introducing Selma Blair*, and *The Biggest Little Farm*. On stage, LD is a five-time Tony Award-winning producer of over 30 productions, including *Dear Evan Hansen*, *Hadestown*, *Angels in America*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, and the cult hit *Teeth*. Recent and upcoming projects include *Two Strangers (Carry A Cake Across New York)*, *Richard II*, *Oedipus*, *The Unknown*, *Paranormal Activity*, and *Dog Day Afternoon*. LD is also a proud investor in Studio Seaview, a new Off-Broadway home for daring, artist-driven theatre.

**THE SHED** (*Producer*). Under the leadership of CEO Meredith "Max" Hodges and founding Artistic Director Alex Poots, The Shed is a cultural institution of and for the 21st century. It produces and welcomes innovative art and ideas, across all forms of creativity, to build a shared understanding of our rapidly changing world and a more equitable society. In its highly adaptable building on Manhattan's west side, The Shed brings together established and emerging artists to create new work in fields ranging from pop to classical music, painting to digital media, theater to literature, and sculpture to

dance. It seeks opportunities to collaborate with cultural peers and community organizations, work with like-minded partners, and provide unique spaces for private events. As an independent nonprofit that values invention, equity, and generosity, The Shed is committed to advancing art forms, addressing the urgent issues of our time, and making work that is impactful, sustainable, and relevant to the local community, the cultural sector, New York City, and beyond. [theshed.org](http://theshed.org) @TheShedNY.

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