

24 May 2021

SOUTH PACIFIC:

GINA BECK AND ALEX YOUNG TO SHARE THE ROLE OF NELLIE FORBUSH AT CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE

Following the happy news that Gina Beck is pregnant, Chichester Festival Theatre is delighted to announce that in the forthcoming production of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *South Pacific*, she will rehearse and open the role of Nellie Forbush as planned with performances from 5 July and a press night on 13 July. From 5 August, Alex Young will share the role of Nellie and take over full-time from 23 August for the remainder of the run. *South Pacific* (which was originally scheduled for 2020) is currently booking until 4 September.

Alex returns to the Festival Theatre where she starred opposite Matt Lucas in *Me and My Girl* in 2018. She and Gina appeared together in Daniel Evans's production of *Show Boat* in Sheffield and the West End

Daniel Evans, Artistic Director of CFT and director of *South Pacific* said: 'It's utterly joyful news that Gina is expecting her second baby and that her long-awaited Chichester debut in the role of Nellie will take place as planned from 5 July. I know that Gina is as delighted as I am that Alex Young will share the role with her at certain performances from 5 August, and take over full-time for the final weeks of the run to allow Gina to focus full-time on her next production!

'Our amazing company – of 31 adults, 6 children and 15 musicians – starts rehearsals today. We are looking forward to exploring this great musical – which invites us to confront the differences within and outside ourselves – through a contemporary lens, and revealing its pertinence to our times.'

Gina Beck said: 'I'm so excited to be finally playing Nellie at Chichester, and am so grateful to CFT for all their support. I'm hoping their trailblazing attitude will spread across the industry to create a future which accommodates those women who want to start a family. When carrying my first child, I became unemployable and unpaid for 6 months of my pregnancy because I looked, well...pregnant. Like most women, I wasn't *unable* to work during this time, but because of some of the industry's more conventional attitudes, financial pressures greatly impacted my choice to return to work when my daughter was just 4 months old.

'Thanks too, and huge respect to my dear friend and fellow mum Alex Young for taking over the reins later in our run, when even I think 8 shows a week may be too much!'

Alex Young added: 'I'm so delighted to be returning to Chichester and joining the extraordinary company of *South Pacific*. To be sharing this gorgeous role with Gina is a huge honour; she is someone I respect and admire enormously as a woman, actress and fellow mother. I'm very grateful to Dan and the team for creating a safe, sensitive and generous environment for parents in the industry. Being a working mum is a challenge, whatever line of work you're in, but could feel almost impossible when you work in the arts, so I'm thrilled this important progress is being made.'

South Pacific is now booking at Chichester Festival Theatre from 5 July – 4 September; tickets from £10.

The full *South Pacific* cast is led by **Gina Beck** (*Matilda, Show Boat, Wicked, Phantom of the Opera*) as Nellie (from 5 July), **Julian Ovenden** (*Bridgerton, Downton Abbey, Merrily We Roll Along, Grand Hotel, BBC Proms*) as Emile, **Joanna Ampil** (*Avenue Q, Les Misérables, Miss Saigon*) as Bloody Mary, **Keir Charles** (*Quiz, Back To Life*) as Luther Billis, **Rob Houchen** (*Les Misérables, The Light in the Piazza*) as Cable and **Alex Young** (*Me and My Girl, Guys and Dolls, Follies*) as Nellie (certain performances from 5 August, full-time from 23 August), with **Iroy Abesamis, Lindsay Atherton, Carl Au, Rosanna Bates, David Birrell, Leslie Garcia Bowman, Taylor Bradshaw, Bobbie Chambers, Charlotte Coggin, Danny Collins, Oliver Edward, Sergio Giacomelli, Shailan Gohil, Adrian Grove, Zack Guest, Cameron Bernard Jones, Amanda Lindgren, Matthew Maddison, Sera Maehara** (as Liat), **Melissa Nettleford, Rachel Jayne Picar, Kate Playdon, Pierce Rogan, Clancy Ryan, Charlie Waddell** and **James Wilkinson-Jones**, with children's roles played by Archer Brandon, Ellie Chung, Lana Lakha, Kami Lieu, David Ngara-O'Dwyer and Alexander Quinlan.

Book online at www.cft.org.uk or 01243 781312.

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