

April 13, 2022

**Princeton University’s Lewis Center for the Arts presents**

***Athens, Georgia***

***A platform performance of a new rock musical by Tony Award-winning composer Stew and Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Paul Muldoon, culmination of a spring Princeton Atelier course***

**Photo Caption:** The cast of the Princeton Atelier production of “Athens, Georgia,” rehearse for the platform performance of a new rock musical written by Tony Award-winning composer Stew and Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Paul Muldoon.

**Photo Credit:** Jon Sweeney

**Who/What:** A platform performance of a new rock musical based on *The Frogs* by Aristophanes with music by Stew (Tony Award-winner for *Passing Strange*) and book and lyrics by Paul Muldoon (Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and Princeton Professor), featuring students from the spring Atelier course, “Athens, Georgia,” and with guest appearances by Tyqaun Malik White as Little Richard and Roman Banks as Chuck Berry.

**When:** Wednesday, April 20, at 4:30 p.m.

**Where:** Hearst Dance Theater

**Admission:** Free and open to the public. Tickets are required though University Ticketing at [tickets.princeton.edu](https://tickets.princeton.edu/online/seatSelect.asp). All guests are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to the maximum extent, which now includes a COVID booster shot for all eligible to receive it, and to wear a mask when indoors. Please note that performers may be unmasked while on stage.

**Accessibility:** Guests in need of access accommodations are asked to contact the Lewis Center at LewisCenter@princeton.edu at least one week prior to the event date.

**For more information:** <https://arts.princeton.edu/events/athens-georgia-a-new-rock-musical/>

PRINCETON, NJ – Princeton University’s Lewis Center for the Arts presents a platform performance of *Athens, Georgia*, a new rock musical based on the ancient Greek play *The Frogs* by Aristophanes, with music composed by Tony Award-winner Stew and book and lyrics by Pulitzer Prize-winner Paul Muldoon. The performance will feature Princeton students from the spring Atelier course of the same name, as well as guest appearances by Tyquan Malik White as Little Richard and Roman Banks as Chuck Berry. The performance will be on Wednesday, April 20 at 4:30 p.m. in the Hearst Dance Theater on the Princeton campus. The event is free and open to the public, however tickets are required through University Ticketing at [tickets.princeton.edu](https://tickets.princeton.edu/online/default.asp). All guests are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to the maximum extent, which now includes a COVID booster shot for all eligible to receive it, and to wear a mask when indoors. Please note that performers may be unmasked while on stage. Guests in need of access accommodations are invited to contact the Lewis Center at LewisCenter@princeton.edu at least one week prior to the event date.

Commissioned by the Public Theater in New York City, *Athens, Georgia* resets the ancient Greek comedy *The Frogs* squarely in the America of the 2020s and combines slapstick comedy with social justice. In the original, the god Dionysus, who is depressed by the state of contemporary Athenian tragedy, travels to visit Hades in the Underworld hoping to bring the great Greek tragedian Euripides back from the dead. Dionysus seeks advice from Hercules on how best to get to the Underworld, ultimately deciding to copy Hercules’ journey and row across a lake with the ferryman Charon. Finally in the Underworld, Dionysus finds Euripides challenging Aeschylus, often considered the Father of Greek Tragedy, to a battle of verses to determine which of them is “The Best Tragic Poet.” Dionysus is asked to judge the contest and begins to question which of the two he will bring back to life. Bringing it into the modern era, *Athens, Georgia*’sprincipal characters include the rock god Dionysus, the guitar hero Hercules, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and, of course, the Real Housewives of Hades.

“The opportunity to develop this musical with the help of our superbly talented students was a blessing,” said Muldoon. “In addition to our students performing as musicians and singers, we were able to benefit from class visits by Barbara Graziosi and Emily Greenwood, both from our Classics Department, who helped contextualize Aristophanes in his time. Michael Cadden regaled us with stories of his involvement in the Sondheim version of *Frogs* presented in the Yale swimming pool in 1974 while Grace Elizabeth Hale gave us the background to her book, *Cool Town: How Athens, Georgia Launched Alternative Music and Changed American* *Culture*.”

**Stew** is a Tony Award and two-time Obie Award-winning playwright/performer, critically acclaimed singer/songwriter, and “veteran of multiple dive-bar stages.” His works include the rock musical *Passing Strange*, winner of a Tony for Best Book of a Musical in 2008, two Obies for Best New Theater Piece and Best Ensemble, and three Drama Desk Awards for Best Musical, Best Lyrics, and Best Music. He has also released 12 critically acclaimed albums written between 1999 and the present by Stew & The Negro Problem and wrote the music for Spike Lee’s television show, *She’s Gotta Have It*. Currently a visiting lecturer at Harvard University, Stew’s classes are recognized as “hothouses of multi-disciplinary, self-challenging experimentation which encourage celebratory transformation via myth-making. His courses are equally informed by the spontaneous immediacy of rock-club survival tactics and the human grandeur of theater. As an instructor, Stew strives to demystify the creative process for students, while simultaneously inviting them to create myths out of their truths, so that those truths might go deeper and shine brighter.”

**Paul Muldoon** is the Howard G.B. Clark ’21 University Professor in the Humanities at Princeton, as well as the founding chair of the Lewis Center for the Arts. As an internationally renowned Irish poet, Muldoon has been described by *The Times Literary Supplement* as “the most significant English-language poet born since the second World War.” Muldoon won the Pulitzer Prize for his ninth collection of poems, *Moy Sand and Gravel* (2002). Additionally, Muldoon has won the 1994 T.S. Eliot Prize, the 2003 Griffin International Prize for Excellence in Poetry, the 2004 Shakespeare Prize, and the 2006 European Prize for Poetry, among others. His fourteenth volume of poems, *Howdie-Skelp*, was released in November 2021 by Farrar Straus & Giroux. Muldoon is the editor of the recently released Paul McCartney boxed, two-volume set, *The Lyrics:1956 to the Present*, illuminating the stories behind 154 of McCartney’s song lyrics. As a musician, Muldoon is a member of the rock band, Rogue Oliphant, that specializes in songs and spoken word pieces

The Princeton Atelier, currently directed by Muldoon, was founded in 1994 by Toni Morrison, Nobel Laureate and Robert F. Goheen Professor in the Humanities, Emeritus, at Princeton University. The Atelier brings professional artists from different disciplines together with Princeton faculty and students to create new work in the context of a semester-long course that culminates in the public presentation of the new work. Participating Atelier artists often select a project they want to explore and experiment within the context of a class with Princeton students before developing it for the professional art world. Previous artists have included the choreographer Jacques d’Amboise, cellist Yo-yo Ma, playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, multimedia artist Laurie Anderson, theater artist Basil Twist, choreographer Monica Bill Barnes, the theater ensemble Elevator Repair Service, percussionist Evelyn Glennie, and the Wakka Wakka puppet theater.

To learn more about the Princeton Atelier, the Lewis Center for the Arts, and the more than 100 public performances, exhibitions, readings, screenings, concerts, lectures, and special events presented by the Lewis Center each year, most of them free, visit [arts.princeton.edu](https://arts.princeton.edu/).

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