

GREEN DAY'S *AMERICAN IDIOT*

Produced by Center Theatre Group in
Collaboration with Deaf West Theatre

AN EXPERIENCE L.A. EVENT

Sunday, October 20, 2024
Mark Taper Forum
Downtown Los Angeles

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- *American Idiot* is a rock opera inspired by a 2004 concept album by Green Day.
- The stage musical version premiered in Berkeley in 2009 and opened on Broadway in 2010.
- This production, a collaboration between Center Theatre Group and Deaf West Theatre, features both Deaf and hearing actors and is performed simultaneously in American Sign Language and spoken English.
- This production is also the first at the Mark Taper Forum after a yearlong closure.

GREEN DAY'S *AMERICAN IDIOT*

The stage musical *American Idiot* was inspired by a 2004 concept album by Green Day. Created in the post-9/11 era, in the early days of the Iraq War and during the presidency of George W. Bush, the album reflected the political polarization, disaffection, and resistance of the time. The era was marked by a large antiwar movement resisting the “war on terror,” which brought with it a rise in Islamophobia, surveillance, racial profiling of Muslims, and lengthy wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The album *American Idiot*, with its antiwar and anti-Bush political commentary, was hugely resonant with young people at the time.

“Growing up queer and brown in small-town America after 9/11, this album played a big role in my life,” Center Theatre Group’s new artistic director Snehal Desai told the *L.A. Times*.

This production is set in the present day. Changes include the replacement of archival clips of former President George W. Bush with clips of other former U.S. presidents. In recent years, Green Day has performed revised versions of some of the songs from the *American Idiot* album and made references to current politics, including criticizing MAGA and former President Trump.



DISABILITY, ACCESS, AND THEATRE

The history of disability representation in theatre is full of examples of characters with disabilities written and performed by abled artists. But the last several decades have seen increasing activism and access, with better representation won through the efforts of artists and advocates with disabilities.

SOME GROUPS TO KNOW ABOUT:

- Chicago Inclusion Project, which brings together theatre artists and audiences often separated by physical ability, body type, economic status, gender identity and ethnicity | thechicagoinclusionproject.org
- National Disability Arts Collection and Archive, which tells the story of the disability arts and culture movement the-ndaca.org
- National Theatre of the Deaf, founded in 1967 | ntd.org
- Phamaly Theatre Company, a Denver-based company for theatre artists with disabilities | phamaly.org
- Sins Invalid, a disability justice performance project that centers queer, trans, and nonbinary people of color with disabilities | sinsinvalid.org

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- What is different in American culture today compared to when *American Idiot* was first performed? Which themes are still just as relevant, and which feel particular to that time?
- How did the dual-language production enhance your experience of the show?
- In addition to performers with disabilities, consider the impact of artists with disabilities behind the scenes of a theatre production. What might a director with disabilities bring to a production that an abled director might not? What about a lighting designer, sound designer, or costume designer? Why is disability representation important both on- and offstage?

THE FRIES TEST

Created by writer and activist Kenny Fries

Does a work have more than one disabled character? Do the disabled characters have their own narrative purpose other than the education and profit of a nondisabled character? Is the character's disability not eradicated either by curing or killing (i.e., are disabled characters allowed to remain disabled)?

DEAF WEST THEATRE

Deaf West Theatre was founded in Los Angeles in 1991. The company engages artists and audiences in theatre and media experiences inspired by Deaf culture and the expressive power of sign language. The company has won multiple Ovation Awards and has been nominated for several Tony Awards. This production is Deaf West Theatre's fourth collaboration with Center Theatre Group.

CENTER THEATRE GROUP

Center Theatre Group is a nonprofit theatre organization. Based in Los Angeles, it is one of the largest theatre nonprofits in the United States. CTG presents programming at the Ahmanson Theatre and the Mark Taper Forum at the Music Center downtown, as well as at the Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City.

CTG was founded in 1967, the same year the Ahmanson Theatre and Mark Taper Forum opened. The Mark Taper Forum had to pause its 2023 season due to a budget shortfall, and *American Idiot* is the first production there since.



Mark Taper Forum, 135 N. Grand Ave., Los Angeles



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Gloria Molina Grand Park's Downtown Día de los Muertos



The Met in HD: *Grounded*



Drag Me to Hell: Demonic Drag Performances and Costume Contest

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- Other events presented by Center Theatre Group
centertheatregroup.org
- Deaf West Theatre | deafwest.org
- Classes and performances at the USC School of Dramatic Arts | dramaticarts.usc.edu
- Classes and performances at the USC Thornton School of Music | music.usc.edu
- Upcoming Visions and Voices Events
 - 10/27** Gloria Molina Grand Park's Downtown Día de los Muertos
 - 10/27** The Met in HD: *Grounded*
 - 10/29** Drag Me to Hell: Demonic Drag Performances and Costume Contest

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

ANDREW JUSTICE of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

ARTICLES

- Lisa M. Chuang and John P. Hart, "[Suburban American Punks and the Musical Rhetoric of Green Day's 'Jesus of Suburbia,'](#)" *Communication Studies* 59, no. 3 (2008): 183–201.
- David Martin Jones and M. L. R Smith, "[Blowin' in the Wind? The Musical Response to the War on Terror,](#)" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 46, no. 12 (2023): 1–24.
- Ben Quail, "[American Idiots: Charting Protest and Activism in the Alternative Music Scene During George W. Bush's Presidency,](#)" *Comparative American Studies* 18, no. 3 (2021): 302–21.

DISSERTATIONS AND THESES

- Sarah Jean Dietsche, "[Sound Divide: American Popular Music's Response to the 'War on Terror' during the George W. Bush Administration.](#)" PhD diss., University of Memphis, 2016.
- Hans-Martin Roer, "['Hearts Recycled but Never Saved'—A Search for Self in the Modern Day Dystopia of Green Day's American Idiot.](#)" Master's thesis, University of Bergen, 2016.

MUSIC

- Green Day, [American Idiot](#) (Reprise Records, 2004).
- John Gallagher, Jr., et al., [American Idiot: Selections from the Original Broadway Cast Recording](#) (Reprise, 2010).
- Billie Joe Armstrong, Michael Mayer, and Tom Kitt, [American Idiot: The Original Broadway Musical: Complete Piano/Vocal Songbook](#) (Alfred, 2010).