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The original Broadway production of JUNK was produced by Lincoln Center Theater (André Bishop, Producing Artistic Director; Adam Siegel, Managing Director) in New York City, opening on November 2, 2017. It was directed by Doug Hughes, the set design was by John Lee Beatty, the costume design was by Catherine Zuber, the lighting design was by Ben Stanton, the original music and sound design were by Mark Bennett, and the stage manager was Charles Means. The cast was follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Actor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROBERT MERKIN</td>
<td>Steven Pasquale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAÚL RIVERA</td>
<td>Matthew Saldivar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISRAEL PETERMAN</td>
<td>Matthew Rauch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BORIS PRONSKY</td>
<td>Joey Slotnick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THOMAS EVERSON</td>
<td>Rick Holmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAXIMILIAN CIZIK</td>
<td>Henry Stram</td>
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<tr>
<td>JACQUELINE BLOUNT</td>
<td>Ito Aghayere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEO TRESLER</td>
<td>Michael Siberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIUSEPPI ADDESSO</td>
<td>Charlie Semine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEVIN WALSH</td>
<td>Phillip James Brannon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUDY CHEN</td>
<td>Teresa Avia Lim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMY MERKIN</td>
<td>Miriam Silverman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARK O’HARE</td>
<td>Ted Koch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORRIGAN WILEY/CURT</td>
<td>Tony Carlin</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEVON ATKINS</td>
<td>Nate Miller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MURRAY LEFKOWITZ</td>
<td>Ethan Phillips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHARLENE STEWART/GHOST WRITER</td>
<td>Caroline Hewitt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENSEMBLE</td>
<td>Demosthenes Chrysan, Jenelle Chu, Ian Lassiter, Adam Ludwig, Sean McIntyre, Stephanie Umoh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The world premiere of JUNK: THE GOLDEN AGE OF DEBT was produced by La Jolla Playhouse (Christopher Ashley, Artistic Director; Michael S. Rosenberg, Managing Director), La Jolla, California, on July 26, 2016. It was directed by Doug Hughes, the scenic design was by John Lee Beatty, the costume design was by William Mellette, the lighting design was by Ben Stanton, the original music and sound design were by Mark Bennett, the dramaturg was Gabriel Greene, and the stage manager was Charles Means. The cast was as follows:

ROBERT MERKIN .......................................................... Josh Cooke
RAÚL RIVERA ........................................................ Armando Riesco
ISRAEL PETERMAN ................................................. Matthew Rauch
BORIS PRONSKY .................................................... Jeff Marlow
THOMAS EVERSON ............................................... Linus Roache
MAXIMILIAN CIZIK ............................................... Henry Stram
JACQUELINE BLOUNT ..................... Zakiya Iman Markland
LEO TRESSLER .......................................................... David Rasche
GIUSEPPI ADDESSO ........................................... Benjamin Burdick
KEVIN WALSH ...................................................... Keith A. Wallace
JUDY CHEN ............................................................ Jennifer Ikeda
AMY MERKIN ......................................................... Annika Boras
MARK O’HARE/MERKIN’S LAWYER/ UNION WORKER ............................................. Sean McIntyre
CORRIGAN WILEY/UNION REP/CURT .............. Tony Carlin
DEVON ATKINS ...................................................... Hunter Spangler
MURRAY LEFKOWITZ/CHEN’S LAWYER ........ Jason Kravits
CHARLENE STEWART ............................................. Zora Howard

JUNK was developed with the support of New York Stage and Film and Vassar’s Powerhouse Season, Summer 2015.
MAJOR CHARACTERS

The Raiders:

ROBERT “BOB” MERKIN. Early 40s. Junk-bond originator and trader at Sacker-Lowell, an investment bank. Merkin is an unusual combination of charismatic leader and behind-the-desk functionary. On the strength of unparalleled focus and remarkable intellectual gifts, he has emerged as the financier of the age.

RAÚL RIVERA. Mid-30s. Lawyer for Sacker-Lowell. Of Cuban extraction. Wry, playful, ruthless.


BORIS PRONSKY. Late 40s. An arbitrageur. Makes money off rumor and intrigue. All façade, no substance. The proverbial little man in a big man’s body.

Management and Its Allies:

THOMAS “TOM” EVERSON, JR. 50s. Chief Executive of Everson Steel and United, the erstwhile manufacturing behemoth and still-member of the Dow Industrial Average. The steel business has fallen on hard times, and Everson Jr. continues to see through the diversification of the company begun under his father’s regime. Though not quite the brilliant businessman his father was, Everson Jr. makes up for it with heart and in loyalty.

MAXIMILIEN “MAX” CIZIK. Late 40s. Investment banker at Lausanne & Co. Adviser to Everson. Urbane, measured, sophisticated. Born in Prague, but brought up in America. Lausanne & Co. is a leading advisory investment bank, and one of the last of such still connected to the great nineteenth century European merchant banks.

LEO TRESLER. Mid-50s. A private equity magnate. Passionate, pompous, lovable, and very rich. A lion of a man with something of a Texas swagger, despite being born and raised in Connecticut.

Law Enforcement:


Other:

JUDY CHEN. Early 30s. Third-generation Chinese-American. A writer. Thoughtful, penetrating, and undaunted by the titans about whom she is writing.


Supporting & Minor Characters:

(Can be doubled as fitting.)


CORRIGAN WILEY. 50s. Attorney for O’Hare. Gruff and loyal. Hailing from a family that has served counsel to generations of the Irish mob.

DEVON ATKINS. Late 20s. An arbitrageur. A kid. In over his head.

MURRAY LEFKOWITZ. 50s. One of Merkin's investors.

CHARLENE STEWART. 20s. Assistant to Robert Merkin.

EVERSON STEEL BOARD MEMBERS (“B.M.”):

B.M. 1. (Male.) Frances D. Fergusson.
B.M. 2. (Male.) Michael Brook.
B.M. 3. *(Female.)* Hailey Welton Perkins.
B.M. 4. *(Male.)* Lewis Stevens.
B.M. 5. *(Male.)* Jeffrey Y. Martin.
B.M. 6. *(Male.)* William Pollard III.
B.M. 7. *(Male.)* Remy Vaucluse.
B.M. 8. *(Male.)* James P. Jordan.
B.A. 9. *(Female.)* Fernanda Sutton.
B.M. 10. *(Male.)* Ira Charles Bernstein.
B.M. 11. *(Male.)* Paxton Marks.

LAWYERS AND OTHERS. As needed.
A NOTE ON SETTING

Great lengths should not be taken to bring the various scene settings too realistically into being. For the events that unfold in what follows are conceived to take place on the stage of what we could call our collective memory. Put into other words, the play is a ritual enactment of an origin myth.

The premium must be on establishing and maintaining an unbroken, vital flow. With a fluidity evocative of the movement of the mind. Allegro con brio, if you will.

The insinuation of the mid-1980s in costume and design must not be overdone. For the world evoked in the events depicted—the origins of debt financing—are not just a matter of the past, but represent an ethos and an ontology very much central to what we call the world today.
We would rather be ruined than changed…

—W. H. Auden
JUNK

ACT ONE

JUDY CHEN.
Quicksilver smarts, striking beauty. Alone onstage as she addresses the audience.

CHEN. This is a story of kings, or what passes for kings these days. Kings, then—bedecked in Brooks Brothers and Brioni, enthroned in sky-high castles, and embroiled in battles over, what else? Money. When did money become the thing—the only thing? Upgrade your place in line, or your prison cell, for a fee. Rent out your womb to carry someone else’s child. Buy a stranger’s life insurance policy—pay the premium until they die—then collect the benefit. Oh, and cash. Whose idea was it to start charging us to get cash?

—Lights up on: Robert Merkin.

The mid-’80s. 1985 to be exact. I’d been writing for Forbes, the Wall Street Journal. And yes, I was used to being surrounded by talk of money. But ’85 was when I sensed something new. The rollick, the rage—the ravenous zeal in people’s eyes. It was like a new religion was being born…

SACKER-LOWELL & ASSOCIATES.
Robert Merkin, Israel Peterman, Raúl Rivera. In the middle of a strategy session.

MERKIN. No, no, Izzy—don’t use that word.
PETERMAN. What word?
MERKIN. Limit. Not when you’re talking about what’s yours…
PETERMAN. Even if I want to impose cuts—
MERKIN. That’s another. Impose.
RIVERA. Reform is better.
MERKIN. You’re going to bring reform—
RIVERA. You have a *vision*.
MERKIN. Which is why you’re buying the company. To help Ever-son Steel grow—
RIVERA. *Change. Transform.*
MERKIN. Human beings are creatures of hope. When you talk about yourself, your company, always use words cut from the cloth of hope.
PETERMAN. Cut from the cloth of hope.
RIVERA. That’s good, huh?
PETERMAN. Fuck me—
MERKIN. But when you talk about *them*—
PETERMAN. Tom Everson?
MERKIN. Tom Everson, Everson Steel management. *That’s* when you use words like *limit*.

RIVERA. They are *limited*.
MERKIN. They don’t get with the program? They’re headed for crisis. Collapse.
RIVERA. Catastrophe.
MERKIN. But *you*. Your company…
RIVERA. *(Selling it.*) Saratoga-McDaniels…
PETERMAN. Has a *vision* for *reform*.
RIVERA. That’s it.
MERKIN. It’s the things people don’t realize they’re hearing…
RIVERA. The echoes, the hidden logic.
MERKIN. The hidden logic. That’s what sinks in. Makes people not just think, but *feel*. That’s the way to their hearts.
PETERMAN. Is there a list or something?
MERKIN. List?
PETERMAN. Of words I should use, not use?

*Merkin and Rivera share a look.*

RIVERA. I mean…—why not? We’ll make a list.
MERKIN. Great.
Rivera takes up a legal pad. Starts jotting. Just as...Charlene, Merkin’s assistant, appears—

CHARLENE. Mr. Merkin, Murray Lefkowitz is on the phone. He’s holding on line one.

MERKIN. Thanks, Charlene. (To Peterman, Rivera.) Let me get this.

Merkin steps into—
—A pool of light.
—Another pool appears, showing:

MURRAY.
A schlemiel. The conversation is quick, percussive.

MERKIN. What do you want, Murray?

MURRAY. I know. I should have—

MERKIN. I gave up on you, Murr.

MURRAY. I’m sorry, Bob.

MERKIN. Did I do something? Did I say something—

MURRAY. Of course not.

MERKIN. So what is it? You can’t call me back? It’s crunch time for this new bond issue. You know that—

MURRAY. I know.

MERKIN. Anyway, we’re selling junk in Izzy Peterman’s company. Saratoga-McDaniels. For him to go after Everson Steel. The bonds are paying seventeen percent, quarterly coupon. Rated triple-C—

MURRAY. Bob—

MERKIN. (Over.) Murr, I want you to come in for more than usual. We’re making our first play on the Dow Jones—

MURRAY. Right—

MERKIN. Shoulder to shoulder. Deal by deal. That’s what we’re doing. Making them see we can be the big machers, too.

MURRAY. I, uh—

MERKIN. I need you. More than ever.

MURRAY. Bob. I have to talk to you. It’s Macie.

MERKIN. (Sudden shift.) Is she okay? Is your wife okay?

MURRAY. No, she’s fine.
MERKIN. Uh-huh…
MURRAY. It’s just—I mean—I’m at one hundred million in liquid
assets. Bob, she just—She doesn’t want me—to take any more risks.
She wants me to stop.
MERKIN. She? Or you?
MURRAY. I don’t want you to be mad.
MERKIN. Four, maybe five million? That’s what you came to me
with seven years ago.
MURRAY. It was Macie’s money.
MERKIN. No.
MURRAY. It was all hers. Her dad’s.
MERKIN. That was hers. The rest? I made you. I make you rich,
you and Macie, and you stop returning my calls?
MURRAY. I was afraid.
MURRAY. She doesn’t like that people call it junk, Bob. She doesn’t
like me putting all that money in something that people talk about
like it’s garbage—
MERKIN. It’s a misnomer, Murr. You know that, right?
MURRAY. But—
MERKIN. (Continuing.) If I was raising money for IBM or GE, Macie
wouldn’t have a problem with that…
MURRAY. I guess not.
MERKIN. Because she’s heard of those companies. Everybody has.
But the returns on that money aren’t anywhere near as good as what
I sell you. I am selling you into the future. That’s what you have to tell
her. Izzy Peterman? Saratoga-McDaniels? Tomorrow’s Jack Welch,
tomorrow’s General Electric.
MURRAY. Bob…
MERKIN. Listen to me, Murr. We’ve known each other a long time.
MURRAY. I know.
MERKIN. We’ve come a long way. Since you sold me that T-shirt
on Canal Street.
MURRAY. I remember.
MERKIN. So this is what I’m going to do. You come in on this deal now, I will buy you out if you want out.
MURRAY. You will?
MERKIN. You want out early? Just say the word.
MURRAY. You’d do that for me?
MERKIN. I promise.

—Lights out on Merkin and Murray.

BACK AT THE CONFERENCE TABLE:

Peterman makes notes as Rivera speaks:

RIVERA. Change, choice, choose… Pursue—
PETERMAN. Lead. How about that?
RIVERA. That’s great.
PETERMAN. I am leading a vision—
RIVERA. We is better than I.
PETERMAN. We are leading a vision…
RIVERA. It’s always we when you’re talking about yourself, your company… We, our, us…
PETERMAN. Right.
RIVERA. —but when you talk about Everson, their CEO, management? Them. They.
PETERMAN. They’re limited. They’re headed for crisis.
RIVERA. Which is the truth. We’re just looking for the best way to tell the truth.
PETERMAN. We are leading a vision of courage.
RIVERA. A path of courage. A vision of…
PETERMAN. Choice?
RIVERA. Just keep at it. You’ll get the hang of it.

Merkin enters. Energized.
MERKIN. Murray’s in for fifty.
RIVERA. Murray’s in for—?
MERKIN. Fifty million.
JUNK
by Ayad Akhtar

23 men, 6 women (doubling)

It’s 1985. Robert Merkin, the resident genius of the upstart investment firm Sacker-Lowell, has just landed on the cover of Time magazine. Hailed as “America’s Alchemist,” his proclamation that “debt is an asset” has propelled him to dizzying heights. Zealously promoting his belief in the near-sacred infallibility of markets, he is trying to reshape the world. What Merkin sets in motion is nothing less than a financial civil war, pitting magnates against workers, lawyers against journalists, and ultimately, pitting everyone against themselves.

“JUNK follows a labyrinthine, economically dense plot with remarkable briskness, efficiency and accessibility. ...The script is refreshingly nonjudgmental.”
—The New York Times

“JUNK melds a breadth of genres—crime story, tragedy, issue play, cautionary tale—into a fast-moving, broad-ranging social thriller. ...In Akhtar’s telling, this story is partly about male status and power...But it’s also about race, privilege, competing ideals and, of course, greed.”
—Time Out New York

“Akhtar once again proves his talent for illuminating the forces running our world, forces that would prefer to remain in the dark.”
—TheaterMania.com

“...smashingly entertaining... This big, brash melodrama is spiked...with acid humor, and it’s propelled by barely contained outrage... That Akhtar manages to make all of this financial wrangling both lucid and exciting is impressive. That he finds so much contemporary resonance in the material...is downright thrilling.”
—The Star-Ledger (NJ)

“...[a] remarkable achievement. JUNK may have no heroes, but it is searingly human. ...JUNK unfolds with the mounting tension of a Shakespearean tragedy.”
—Deadline.com

Also by Ayad Akhtar
DISGRACED
THE INVISIBLE HAND
THE WHO & THE WHAT

DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.