

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse Stages “Mlima’s Tale,” Theatrical Fable by Pulitzer Prize-Winning Playwright Lynn Nottage

Westport Country Playhouse will stage the powerful, theatrical fable, “Mlima’s Tale,” written by two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lynn Nottage and directed by Playhouse artistic director Mark Lamos, from October 1 – 19. This is the first production of the play since its world premiere Off-Broadway last year.

“Mlima’s Tale” is about a magnificent and beloved Kenyan elephant named Mlima hunted for his coveted ivory tusks. As traffickers maneuver the illicit ivory market, from Kenya to Vietnam to Beijing, the animal’s invincible spirit follows their path of desire, greed, crime, and corruption.

“The play’s themes are presented in a feast of vibrant theatricality,” said Lamos. “I fell in love with this play because it partakes of ancient theatrical traditions in order to awaken us to— and meditate on — an international crisis, whose responsibility is shared by all of us.”

Lamos noted that one actor portrays not only an animal but its spirit, while three other actors shape-shift into 20 characters. “Indian Kathakali, Japanese Noh, and Kabuki Theater traditions, in addition to Native American and African tribal dances, all depict animals and hunters, ghosts, and shape-shifters,” he explained. “They speak to their communities about things that matter, and this play speaks to us, the human community, about our treatment of sensitive and sentient animal communities torn apart by men.

“As these animal communities disappear from the face of the earth, the art of live theater can truly connect us to them, to their spirits, and to the people propelled by poverty and capitalism who benefit from their slaughter,” Lamos emphasized.

The cast of “Mlima’s Tale” includes **Jermaine Rowe** as Mlima (Westport Country Playhouse’s “Man of La Mancha”; Broadway’s “The Lion King,” “Fela!”; Dance Theatre of Harlem, National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica).

Three other cast members play a variety of roles: **Jennean Farmer** as Player 1 (New York theater’s “Toni Stone,” “Ain’t No Mo’,” “Blueprint Specials”; film’s “Smile”; television’s “FBI,” “One Tree Hill”); **Adit Dileep** as Player 2 (Regional theater’s “Disgraced,” “Animals Out of Paper”; Showtime’s “Billions,” HBO’s “Succession,” Sundance’s “The Sound of Silence”); and **Carl Hendrick Louis** as Player 3 (Broadway’s “1984,” “The Cherry Orchard”; Off-Broadway’s “The Emperor Jones,” “The Tempest”; film’s “Fan Girl,” “Unknown Soldier”; television’s “Mindhunter”).

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Playwright Lynn Nottage won the Pulitzer Prize for two of her plays, “Ruined” and “Sweat.” “Ruined” also received an Obie, Lucille Lortel Award, New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award, Drama Desk Award, and Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Play. “Sweat” also earned an Obie Award, Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Tony nomination, and Drama Desk nomination. In 2015, Westport Country Playhouse produced Nottage’s play, “Intimate Apparel.” “Mlima’s Tale” was originally developed and produced by The Public Theater under the artistic direction of Oskar Eustis in spring 2018. A graduate of Brown University and the Yale School of Drama, Nottage is an associate professor in the Theatre Department at Columbia School of the Arts.

Director Mark Lamos has helmed many plays at Westport Country Playhouse since 2008. His extensive New York credits include “Our Country’s Good,” for which he received a Tony Award nomination. A former artistic director at Hartford Stage, he earned the 1989 Tony Award for the theater’s body of work. He was awarded the Connecticut Medal for the Arts as well as honorary doctorates from Connecticut College, University of Hartford, and Trinity College. In 2016 he was the recipient of the John Houseman Award.

The creative team includes Claire DeLiso, set design; Fabian Fidel Aguilar, costume design; Isabella Byrd, lighting design; Michael Keck, composer; Yana Birykova, projection design; Jeffrey Page, choreographer; Michael Rossmly, fight director; Samantha Shoffner, props supervisor; Julie Foh, dialect coach; and Chris De Camillis, production stage manager.

A series of special events surrounding the production include a film screening, panel discussions, guest speakers, post-show talkbacks, and a photography exhibit.

Production Sponsors are Czekaj Artistic Productions and Barbara and John Samuelson. Education Sponsor is Graham Foundation of Connecticut. The project is supported in part by CT Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. 2019 Media Sponsors are Moffly Media and WSHU Public Radio.

Performance schedule is Tuesday at 7 p.m., Wednesday at 2 and 8 p.m., Thursday and Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 3 and 8 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. Special series feature Taste of Tuesday (October 1), LGBT Night OUT (October 3), Post-Play Dialogues (October 3 and 10), Opening Night (October 5), Sunday Symposium (October 6), Together at the Table Family Dinner (October 8), Open Captions (October 13), Backstage Pass (October 16), Playhouse Happy Hour (October 17), and Thursday TalkBack (October 17).

Single tickets for “Mlima’s Tale” start at \$30 during preview performances (October 1-4), and after October 5th Opening Night, tickets start at \$40, and are subject to change based upon availability. Buy early for best prices. Special offers are available for seniors, students, educators, and playwrights. For details, visit westportplayhouse.org/special-offers.

Upcoming at Westport Country Playhouse is Molière’s “Don Juan,” November 5 through November 23, a world premiere translation and adaptation by Brendan Pelsue, directed by David Kennedy.

All play titles, artists, and dates are subject to change.

For more information and to buy tickets, visit www.westportplayhouse.org, or call the box office at (203) 227-4177, toll-free at 1-888-927-7529, or visit Westport Country Playhouse, 25 Powers Court, off Route 1, Westport. Stay connected to the Playhouse on Facebook (Westport Country Playhouse), follow on Twitter (@WCPlayhouse), and on YouTube (WestportPlayhouse).

ABOUT WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

The mission of Westport Country Playhouse is to enrich, enlighten, and engage the community through the power of professionally produced *theater worth talking about* and the welcoming experience of the Playhouse campus. The not-for-profit Playhouse provides this experience in multiple ways by offering live theater experiences of the highest quality, under the artistic direction of Mark Lamos; educational and community engagement events to further explore the work on stage; the New Works Initiative, a program dedicated to the discovery, development, and production of new live theatrical works; special performances and programs for students and teachers with extensive curriculum support material;

Script in Hand play readings to deepen relationships with audiences and artists; the renowned Woodward Internship Program during the summer months for aspiring theater professionals; Family Festivities presentations to delight young and old alike and to promote reading through live theater; youth performance training through Broadway Method Academy, Westport Country Playhouse's resident conservatory program; and the beautiful and historic Playhouse campus open for enjoyment and community events year-round. Charity Navigator has recently awarded its top 4-star charity rating to the Playhouse in recognition of its strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency.

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Photo Caption - L-R: "Mlima's Tale" cast members Adit Dileep, Jermaine Rowe, Jennean Farmer, and Carl Hendrick Louis, with Director Mark Lamos. *Photo by Cynthia Astmann*