

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Westport Country Playhouse Stages “Skeleton Crew,” Powerful Drama by Dominique Morisseau, 2018 MacArthur “Genius Grant” Fellow

Westport Country Playhouse will stage the gripping drama, “Skeleton Crew,” written by 2018 MacArthur “Genius Grant” Fellow Dominique Morisseau and directed by LA Williams, from June 4 through June 22.

In “Skeleton Crew,” rumor has it that Detroit’s last export auto plant will soon close. Four factory workers navigate opposing agendas and shifting power dynamics in their desperate attempts to survive whatever comes next.

“When I first read ‘Skeleton Crew,’ I felt as if I were discovering a lost play by the great August Wilson,” said Mark Lamos, Westport Country Playhouse artistic director. “Morisseau’s vividly wrought characters—two women: one young, the other with thirty years of experience at the plant, and two men: one a manager, the other a youth—are drawn with a density and richness, and a full-blooded warmth courses through their lives. The dramatic tension rises out of character as well as culture.”

The cast of “Skeleton Crew” includes **Leland Fowler** as Dez (Off-Broadway’s “If Pretty Hurts Ugly,” “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” “Measure for Measure”; regional theater’s “Skeleton Crew” at Dorset Theatre Festival, “Seven Guitars” at Yale Repertory Theater; BA Morehouse College, MFA Yale School of Drama); **Perri Gaffney** as Faye (Off-Broadway’s “The Resurrection of Alice,” adapted from her novel, AUDELCO nomination Best Solo Performance; “Harlem Duet,” AUDELCO nomination Best Actress; “The Waiting Room,” AUDELCO nomination Best Ensemble; other credits include “Steel Magnolias,” Theatre Tampa Bay Outstanding Lead Actress nomination); **Toni Martin** as Shanita (Broadway’s “Airline Highway”; New York’s “Dream Ticket”; Chicago’s “Airline Highway,” “A Raisin in the Sun,” Best Supporting Actress award from Black Theatre Alliance; Washington D.C.’s “Nina Simone: Four Women”; BFA University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee); and **Sean Nelson** as Reggie (multiple plays on and off-Broadway including “The Shadow Box,” “American Buffalo,” “Hey Little Walter”; lead role in his debut film ‘Fresh’; HBO miniseries “The Corner,” MTV film “The Wood”).

Author Dominique Morisseau, a Detroit native, is the author of “The Detroit Project” (A 3-Play Cycle) which includes the following plays: “Skeleton Crew,” “Paradise Blue,” and “Detroit ’67.” Additional plays include “Pipeline,” “Sunset Baby,” “Blood at the Root,” and “Follow Me to Nellie’s.” She is also the book writer on the new musical “Ain’t Too Proud – The Life and Times of the Temptations.” Morisseau is an alumna of The Public Theater Emerging Writer’s Group, Women’s Project Lab, and Lark Playwrights Workshop, and has developed work at Sundance Lab, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and Eugene O’Neill Playwrights Conference. Her work has been commissioned by Steppenwolf Theatre, Women’s

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Project, South Coast Repertory, People's Light and Theatre, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival/Penumbra Theatre. She most recently served as co-producer on the Showtime series "Shameless." Awards include Spirit of Detroit Award, PoNY Fellowship, Sky-Cooper Prize, TEER Trailblazer Award, Steinberg Playwright Award, AUDELCO Awards, NBFT August Wilson Playwriting Award, Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama, OBIE Award, Ford Foundation Art of Change Fellowship, and being named one of Variety's Women of Impact for 2017-18. Most recently she received a Tony Award® nomination for Best Book of a Musical for "Ain't Too Proud - The Life and Times of the Temptations."

Director LA Williams is currently an inaugural recipient of the Old Globe Classical Directing Fellowship. Recent Off-Broadway credits include assistant to Oskar Eustis and Suzan-Lori Parks on the world premiere of "White Noise" by Suzan-Lori Parks at The Public Theater. Williams has developed and directed new work at The Public Theater, The New Group, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, The Classical Theatre of Harlem, and The Kennedy Center. He is a member of the Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab and was a recipient of the National Directors Fellowship, Clubbed Thumb Directing Fellowship, and Kenny Leon Directing Fellowship. Education: MA Emerson College; BA Alabama State University.

The creative team includes Caite Hevner; set design; Asa Benally, costume design; Xavier Pierce, lighting design; Chris Lane, sound design; Samantha Shoffner, props supervisor; Bryan Bauer, production stage manager; and Megan Smith, assistant stage manager.

Production Sponsors are Judy and Scott Phares. Corporate Production Partner is Fidelity Investments.

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 (June 4), LGBT Night OUT (June 6), Post-Play Dialogues (June 6 and 13), Opening Night (June 8), Sunday Symposium (June 9), Together at the Table Family Dinner (June 11), Open Captions (June 16), Backstage Pass (June 19), Playhouse Happy Hour (June 20), and Thursday TalkBack (June 20).

Single tickets start at \$30 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 "Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin," July 16 through August 3, with lyrics and music by Irving Berlin, book by Hershey Felder, and directed by Trevor Hay; "Mlima's Tale," October 1 through October 19, written by Lynn Nottage and directed by Mark Lamos; and 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.

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