

**LYNN NOTTAGE'S WEST COAST PREMIERE**  
**BY THE WAY, MEET VERA STARK**  
**OPENS AT THE GEFFEN**

*Cast Features Kevin Carroll, Merle Dandridge, Amanda Detmer,  
 Spencer Garrett, Kimberly Hébert Gregory, Sanaa Lathan and Mather Zickel  
 Helmed by Obie Award Winner Jo Bonney*

*Opens September 26, 2012*

**LOS ANGELES, September 26, 2012** — The West Coast premiere of Pulitzer Prize winner Lynn Nottage's *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* opens at the Geffen Playhouse with an acclaimed cast that includes a mix of original cast members and new artists. **Sanaa Lathan** (*A Raisin in the Sun, Contagion*), who originated the title role in the New York run, will once again take the stage as the 1930's era maid turned movie star, reunited with fellow original cast member **Kimberly Hébert Gregory** (Spike Lee's *Red Hook Summer*) who is reprising her role as aspiring African American actress Lottie. Broadway vet and Geffen alum **Merle Dandridge** (*Spamalot, Rent, Aida*) will take on the spicy role of Anna Mae, who fakes a Brazilian accent for a slice of fame, and former leading lady of ABC's *Man Up*, **Amanda Detmer**, will portray Gloria Mitchell, the white starlet dubbed "America's little sweetie pie" and Vera's first employer. Helmed by award-winning director **Jo Bonney**, the cast also features **Kevin Carroll** (*Paid in Full, Being John Malkovich*), **Spencer Garrett** (*Iron Man 3, Air Force One*) and Geffen alum **Mather Zickel** (*Extraordinary Chambers, Rachel Getting Married*).

It's Hollywood's heyday and the streets of Los Angeles are filled with glitz, glamour and the chance at stardom — that is as long as you have the "right" look. But when former maid Vera Stark lands a groundbreaking role in a new Southern epic, she turns Hollywood on its head and paves the way for future generations of black actresses. More than five decades later, Vera's influence on race, film and feminism has seeped its way into pop-culture. But who is the real Vera Stark? Part comedy and part commentary, *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* uses today's fascination with celebrity and controversy to get to the truth behind the legend.

*By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* had its world premiere in 2011 at Second Stage Theatre in New York. The Geffen Playhouse production marks the West Coast premiere.

Opening night festivities, which are sponsored by Audi of America and *Los Angeles* magazine, will be held at the Geffen Playhouse. The evening will feature culinary delights provided by Napa Valley Grille as well as a unique *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*-themed cake designed by Richard Ruskell Pastries' pastry chef Richard Ruskell with drinks provided by Malibu Family Wines.

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**BY THE WAY, MEET VERA STARK**

Written by Lynn Nottage

Directed by Jo Bonney

Preview Performances: Tuesday, September 18 – Tuesday, September 25, 2012

**Opening Night:** Wednesday, September 26, 2012**Closing Night:** Sunday, October 28, 2012**Cast**

Kevin Carroll	Leroy Barksdale / Herb Forrester
Merle Dandridge	Anna Mae / Afua Assata Ejobo
Amanda Detmer	Gloria Mitchell
Spencer Garrett	Fredrick Slasvick / Brad Donovan
Kimberly Hébert Gregory	Lottie / Carmen Levy-Green
Sanaa Lathan	Vera Stark
Mather Zickel	Maximillian Von Oster / Peter Rhys-Davies

**Production Credits**

Set Designer	Neil Patel
Costume Designer	ESosa
Lighting Designer	Jeff Croiter
Sound Designer	John Gromada
Projection Designer	Shawn Sagady
Film by	Tony Gerber
Production Stage Manager	Michele Minor
Assistant Stage Manager	Susie Walsh
Casting	Phyllis Schuringa

**Performance Schedule**

Monday	No performances
Tuesday – Friday	8:00pm
Saturday	3:00pm; 8:00pm
Sunday	2:00pm; 7:00pm

**Ticket Info**

Ticket prices currently range from \$47 to \$77 for the regular run. Tickets are available in-person at the Geffen Playhouse box office, via phone at 310-208-5454 or online at [www.geffenplayhouse.com](http://www.geffenplayhouse.com).

**Biographies****KEVIN CARROLL** (*Leroy Barksdale / Herb Forrester*)

Kevin Carroll is thrilled to make his Geffen Playhouse debut in this production. Selected film credits include: *Ed's Next Move*, *Being John Malkovich*, *The Object Of My Affection* (as Jennifer Aniston's love interest), *The Secret Lives of Dentist*, *The Notorious Bettie Page*, *Always Outnumbered*, *Jesus' Son*, *Pipe Dream*, *Paper Soldiers*, *You're Nobody Till Somebody Kills You*, *Margaret* and the cult classic *Paid In Full*. Selected TV: *Law And Order SVU & Criminal Intent*, *Strong Medicine*, *Numb3rs*, *ER*, and *Detroit 187*. Broadway: *Angels In America*, *45 Seconds From Broadway*, *Take Me Out* and *Bring In Da Noise Bring In Da Funk*. Regionally: Obie Award Winner, *Home*, *Stick Fly*, *Seven Guitars*, *Stop Kiss*, *Satellites*, *Hamlet*, *Blues For An Alabama Sky* (Pasadena Playhouse), and *A Raisin In The Sun* (ERT, Kirk Douglas). For more, visit [www.aboutkevincarroll.com](http://www.aboutkevincarroll.com).

**MERLE DANDRIDGE** (*Anna Mae / Afua Assata Ejobo*)

Broadway: *Spamalot* (Lady of the Lake), *Tarzan* (Kala), *Aida* (Aida), *Rent* (Joanne), *Jesus Christ Superstar*. U.S./European Tours: *Spamalot*, *Aida*, *Rent*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Smokey Joe's Café*. Regional: Williamstown Theatre Festival, Geffen Playhouse (*Atlanta*), La Jolla Playhouse, Pasadena Playhouse and several Chicago theaters. Television: *The Newsroom*, *Chicago Fire* (pilot), *Sons of Anarchy*, *Criminal Minds*, *Ringer*, *Lie to Me*, *Love Bites*, *CSI: Miami*, *Matadors* (pilot), *The Deep End*, *24*, *I'm Paige Wilson* (pilot), *Pros and Cons* (pilot), *Third Watch*, *NCIS*, *All My Children*, *Angel*, *The Edge* (pilot), *Guiding Light*. She is also known for her award-winning performance as Alyx Vance in the *Half Life 2* video game series.

**AMANDA DETMER** (*Gloria Mitchell*)

Amanda Detmer's acting career began in New York City where she received her Master of Fine Arts from NYU. Following graduation Detmer went straight to the stage, working at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis where she

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starred in productions of *Amadeus* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. She has since become a familiar face

onscreen. On television, she most recently starred as Brenda Hayden in the ABC comedy *Man Up* and enjoyed a recurring arc on *Necessary Roughness*. Other television credits include a series lead on ABC's *What About Brian* and a recurring role on *Private Practice*. Amanda has also been seen in films such as *Saving Silverman*, *Big Fat Liar*, *Final Destination* and *The Majestic*.

**SPENCER GARRETT** (*Fredrick Slasvick / Brad Donovan*)

Spencer Garrett is pleased and proud to make his Geffen Playhouse debut with this production. Theater credits include: Broadway *Roots and Wings* and *American Dream* (Circle in the Square), Off Broadway and regional: *Gunplay*, *Election* (Naked Angels), *Crazy Eights* (Echo Theatre Company), *In the Moonlight Eddie* and *Alone Together* (Pasadena Playhouse), *The Real Thing* (I.C.T.), *Heartbreak* (Hudson Guild-Dramalogue Award Best Actor), *Adaptation* (Ensemble Studio Theatre) and *Sex Plays* by George Furth (Matrix). For L.A. Theatreworks: *The Lion in Winter*, *Oedipus*, *Zoot Suit*, *The Country Girl*. Television work: over 100 recurring/guest leads including *Game Change*, *Luck*, *24*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *The West Wing*, *Law and Order* (C.I. and *Mother ship*), *Criminal Minds*, *Harry's Law*. Film: *Air Force One*, *Stars Fell on Henrietta*, *Public Enemies*, *Charlie Wilson's War*, *Bobby* (S.A.G Award nomination, best ensemble), *Thank you for Smoking*, *Lovely and Amazing*, and as Tom DeLay in *Casino Jack* for the late, great George Hickenlooper. Recently completed work on *Iron Man 3*, *Chavez* and *Hitchcock*.

**KIMBERLY HÉBERT GREGORY** (*Lottie / Carmen Levy-Green*)

Kimberly is delighted to revisit this piece as her Geffen Playhouse debut. She can be seen in Spike Lee's summer film, *Red Hook Summer*, as Sister Sweet. Her theatrical credits include: The Public Theatre: *The Brother/Sister Plays*, where she played Aunt Elegua and Shun; Second Stage: *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*; Hartford Stage: *Antony and Cleopatra* (Starring Kate Mulgrew) and *Gees Bend*; The McCarter Theatre: *The Brother/Sister Plays*; The Magic Theatre: *Tough Titty* by Oni Faida Lampley; The 1st National NY Irish Theatre Festival: a notable one-woman piece entitled *Evangeline Elsewhere*; and the national tour of the Broadway hit, *The Lion King*.

**SANAA LATHAN** (*Vera Stark*)

Tony-Award nominated actress, Sanaa Lathan delivers a striking presence and undeniable energy to every project she takes on. She can currently be seen in season two of the Starz series *Boss* opposite Kelsey Grammer. Lathan received rave reviews as well as winning the Lortel Award and receiving a Drama Desk Award nomination for her portrayal of the title role in *By The Way, Meet Vera Stark* at the Second Stage Theatre in Manhattan. She starred as Maggie the Cat in the West End's award-winning revival of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Lathan reprised her Tony-nominated role as Beneatha Younger in the critically acclaimed ABC production of *A Raisin in the Sun*. Her additional feature credits include Steven Soderbergh's *Contagion*, *Something New*, *Alien Versus Predator*, *Brown Sugar*, *The Best Man* and *Love and Basketball* for which she received a best actress NAACP Image Award. Currently she is lending her voice to the Fox animated show *The Cleveland Show*.

**MATHER ZICKEL** (*Maximillian Von Oster / Peter Rhys-Davies*)

Mather Zickel hails from New York City where he studied acting at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and The Shakespeare Lab at the Public Theatre. He spent fifteen years performing in many New York experimental venues, working with some of America's most creative young playwrights such as Sarah Ruhl, Gina Gionfriddo, and Adam Bock. Since then, Mather has appeared in a wide variety of film and television roles. Some of his favorites are Kieran in *Rachel Getting Married* (Sony Classic), District Attorney Mike Powers in *Reno: 911!* (Comedy Central) and in the series *Man Up* for ABC. Mather is currently shooting the lead role in the series *Newsreaders* for Adult Swim, which is a spin-off to the wildly popular series *Children's Hospital*.

**LYNN NOTTAGE** (Playwright)

Lynn Nottage is a playwright from Brooklyn. Her play *Ruined* enjoyed successful runs at Manhattan Theatre Club, the Goodman Theatre and the Geffen Playhouse and won several awards including the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Obie Award. Her plays, which have been developed and produced at theaters both nationally and internationally, also include *Intimate Apparel* (New York Drama Critics' Circle Award); *Fabulation or The Re-Education of Undine* (Obie Award); *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, *Las Meninas*; *Mud, River, Stone*; *Por'knockers*; and *Poof!*. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2007 MacArthur Foundation "Genius Grant," the National Black Theatre Festival's August Wilson Playwriting Award, the 2004 PEN/Laura Pels Award for Drama, the 2005 Guggenheim Grant for Playwriting, as well as fellowships from the Lucille Lortel Foundation, Manhattan Theatre Club, New Dramatists and New York Foundation for the Arts. She sits on The Dramatists Guild Council, an alumna of New Dramatists and a graduate of Brown University and the Yale School of Drama, where she is a visiting lecturer.

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**JO BONNEY** (Director)

Premieres of plays by Alan Ball, Eric Bogosian, Culture Clash, Eve Ensler, Jessica Goldberg, Danny Hoch, Neil LaBute, Warren Leight, Lynn Nottage, Dael Orlandersmith, Suzan-Lori Parks, Darci Picoult, Will Power, David Rabe, Jose Rivera, Christopher Shinn, Diana Son, Universes, Naomi Wallace, Michael Weller. Productions of plays by Carol Churchill, Nilo Cruz, Anna Deavere Smith, Charles Fuller, Lisa Loomer, John Osborne and Lanford Wilson. Theatres: PS 122, The Public Theater NYC, New York Theatre Workshop, Second Stage, NYC, The Goodman Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, MCC, NYC, Geffen Playhouse, Williamstown Theatre Festival, The McCarter Theatre, Playwrights Horizons, Arena Stage, Mark Taper Forum, Signature Theatre, NYC, Long Wharf Theatre, The New Group, NYC, Classic Stage Company, NYC, Humana Theatre Festival, Almeida Theatre, London, Edinburgh Theatre Festival, The Market Theatre, Johannesburg, Cine 13, Paris. Recipient of a 1998 Obie Award for Sustained Excellence of Direction, Lucille Lortel Best Musical and Lucille Lortel Best Revival. Editor of *Extreme Exposure: An Anthology of Solo Performance Texts from the Twentieth Century* (TCG).

#### **ABOUT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE**

The Geffen Playhouse has been a hub of the Los Angeles theater scene since opening its doors in 1995. Noted for its intimacy and celebrated for its world-renowned mix of classic and contemporary plays, provocative new works and second productions, the Geffen Playhouse continues to present a body of work that has garnered national recognition. Named in honor of entertainment mogul and philanthropist David Geffen, who made the initial donation to the theater, the company was founded by Gilbert Cates, and is currently helmed by Artistic Director Randall Arney, Managing Director Ken Novice and Chairman of the Board Frank Mancuso. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen Playhouse welcomes an audience of more than 130,000 each year, and maintains an extensive education and outreach program, designed to engage young people and the community at large in the arts. For more information, please visit [geffenplayhouse.com](http://geffenplayhouse.com).

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