



**REQUEST FOR COVERAGE
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August 10, 2016

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Chester, MA—*The Mountaintop* comes to the foothills of the Berkshires when Katori Hall's award-winning play opens at Chester Theatre Company on Thursday, August 18th at 8:00 p.m. A bold re-imagining of the last night in the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Mountaintop* runs through August 28 at the historic Chester Town Hall at 15 Middlefield Road in Chester, MA.

Set entirely in Room 306 of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis on the night of April 3, 1968, *The Mountaintop* begins with a weary MLK alone in his room, wanting nothing more than a cigarette and a cup of coffee. What he gets instead is a visit from Camae, an irreverent motel maid who, in a heated dialogue that is by turns humorous, challenging, and deeply moving, forces Dr. King to confront his humanity, his legacy, and, ultimately, his mortality.

When *The Mountaintop* premiered in London, where it received the Olivier Award for Best New Play, *The Independent* called it "an imaginative portrayal" of "a relationship that is breathtaking, hilarious and heart-stopping in its exchanges and in its speedy ability to reveal character and pull the audience into the ring." Theater critic Charles Spencer in *The Daily Telegraph* wrote, "It is a beautiful and startling piece, beginning naturalistically before shifting gear into something magical, spiritual and touching."

Playing Dr. King at CTC is **Jordan Mahome**, a New York-based actor, director and educator. His NY credits include roles in Lynn Nottage's *By The Way* and *Meet Vera Stark* at 2econd Stage, *The Play About My Dad* by Boo Killebrew at 59E59, Tarell McCraney's *The Brothers Size* at The Public/McCarter, Thomas Bradshaw's *The Bereaved* at the Wild Project, Stephen Adly Guirgis' *Jesus Hopped the A Train* at Atlantic Theater Co., and Larry Kunofsky's *Your Boyfriend May Be Imaginary* at St.Marks Under. Other roles include Orlando in *As You Like It*, Antonio in *Merchant of Venice*, Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Serebryakov in Chekov's *Uncle Vanya*. Onscreen, Jordan can be seen in the recurring role of Slim in Baz Luhrmann's Netflix series *The Get Down*; as Hightower in HBO's mini-series *The Night Of*, with John Turturro; and in the feature films *Family Weekend* with Kristin Chenoweth, *LIFE* with Eddie Murphy, and Disney's *Max Keeble's Big Move*. He received his MFA from Yale.

Playing Camae is actor/writer **Shelley Fort**. Daughter of a poet and dancer/choreographer, Shelley was born in Wilmington, NC., raised in Connecticut and Nebraska, and trained throughout the world, including in St. Petersburg at the Russia

Theater Arts Academy, at the British American Drama Academy, and at the National Theater Institute at the Eugene O'Neill Center in Waterford, CT. A workshop of her play, *Black Wings Bloom on an Ivory Sky* will be presented this fall at the National Black Theatre in New York. Shelley's New York stage credits include playing Blossom in *Burnished By Grief* at La MaMa, and MiMi in *Harry and The Thief* at Habitat Theater Co. Regionally, Shelley has appeared as Mayme in *Intimate Apparel* and Belle in *A Christmas Carol* at Trinity Rep, and Cressida in *Troilus and Cressida* with the Bread Loaf Acting Ensemble. Her film and television work includes Josh Radnor's *Liberal Arts*, and Lucy Gillespie's upcoming series *Unicornland*. Shelley is currently working with her sister Claire on a screenplay about the marriage of their biracial parents, their pursuit of the American dream, and the price one pays for happiness. Also a choreographer and dancer, Shelley has performed at the American College Dance Association, Brown University, and Kenyon College. She holds a BA from Kenyon College and an MFA from Brown/Trinity Rep. More information can be found at www.shelleyfort.com

Directing *The Mountaintop* is **Colette Robert**, a Los Angeles native currently living and working in New York. Among her recent directing credits are ICONS/IDOLS at The New Ohio/Ice Factory Festival; *Flops, Failures, and Fiascos* at The Civilians/Let Me Ascertain You; *Something Like Loneliness* at Ensemble Studio Theatre; and *When Last We Flew*, Diversionary Theatre, FringeNYC, GLAAD Media Award. Colette is a member of Ensemble Studio Theatre and co-facilitator of the New Georges Jam, and an alumnus of Lincoln Center Directors Lab and The Civilians R&D Group. She is a 2015-2016 Audrey Resident at New Georges, a 2016 Mabou Mines Resident Artist, and was the Public Theater's 2009 Van Lier Directing Fellow. She has developed new work with EST/Youngblood, Atlantic Theatre Company, The Old Vic, Ma-Yi, Naked Angels, Vineyard Arts Project, NYTW, Classical Theatre of Harlem, and the Sundance Theatre Lab. Colette received her M.A. from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art/King's College in London, and a B.A. from Yale University. Follow her at www.coletterobert.com

Playwright **Katori Hall** won the 2010 Olivier Award for Best New Play for *The Mountaintop*, which also earned nominations for Whatsonstage Awards and the *Evening Standard* award for Most Promising Playwright. A native of Memphis, TN, Hall's other plays include *Hurt Village* (2011 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Signature Theatre), *Children of Killers* (National Theatre, UK and Castillo Theatre, NYC), *Hoodoo Love* (Cherry Lane Theatre), *Remembrance* (Women's Project), *Saturday Night/Sunday Morning*, *WHADDABLOODCLOT!!!* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *Our Lady of Kibeho* (Signature Theatre) and *Pussy Valley* (*Mixed Blood*). Her awards include the Lark Play Development Center Playwrights of New York (PoNY) Fellowship, the ARENA Stage American Voices New Play Residency, the Kate Neal Kinley Fellowship, two Lecomte du Nouy Prizes from Lincoln Center, the Fellowship of Southern Writers Bryan Family Award in Drama, a NYFA Fellowship, the Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award, the Columbia University John Jay Award for Distinguished Professional Achievement, the Otto Rene Castillo Award for Political Theatre, and the Otis Guernsey New Voices Playwriting Award. Hall's journalism has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, UK's *The Guardian*, *Essence* and *The Commercial Appeal*, including contributing reporting for *Newsweek*. *The Mountaintop* and *Katori Hall: Plays One* are published by

Methuen Drama. Hall is an alumna of the Lark Playwrights' Workshop, where she developed *The Mountaintop* and *Our Lady of Kibeho*, and a graduate of Columbia University, the A.R.T. at Harvard University, and the Juilliard School. She is a proud member of the Ron Brown Scholar Program, the Coca-Cola Scholar Program, the Dramatists Guild, Writers Guild of America East and the Fellowship of Southern Writers. She is currently a member of the Residency Five at Signature Theatre Company in New York City. Katori will make her directing debut with a film adaptation of *Hurt Village*. Find out more at <http://katorihall.com>.

A series of Talkbacks, Cast Conversations, and a Panel Discussion — *The Mountaintop: the Civil Rights Movement from Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. to Black Lives Matter* — will provide audiences with an opportunity to engage in the ongoing conversation about the American social contract; its promise of equality, how it has and has not made space for African Americans, and why theatre is a particularly powerful medium for exploring difficult topics.

The Panel Discussion will be held on Sunday, August 21, following the 2:00 p.m. matinee (approx. 3:30 p.m.) Producing Artistic Director Daniel Elihu Kramer will moderate the discussion, which will feature Natalie Sowell, Associate Professor of Theatre at Hampshire College and a specialist in theatre for social change. "*The Mountaintop* is a play of great power and great imagination and it comes at an important time," said Kramer. "Equality is still a central, and unresolved, question in our country. Katori Hall has the courage to see the challenge of our present moment, and of our future, in our history." A grant from Mass Humanities, with a focus on Negotiating the Social Contract, is helping to produce the play and the audience-engagement series.

Show times for *The Mountaintop* are 8:00 p.m. Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and 2:00 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays. Ticket prices are \$37.50 for general audiences and \$10.00 for students and residents of Chester. Tickets may be purchased online at chestertheatre.org, or by phone at 1.800.595.4TIX (4849). Special rates for groups of 10 or more are available.

In brief:

The Mountaintop by Katori Hall will have its Regional Premiere at Chester Theatre Company August 18-28.

Performances are 8:00 p.m. Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays; 2:00 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays.

The theatre is located in the Chester Town Hall, 15 Middlefield Road, Chester, MA, 01011.

The audience-engagement series includes:

Talkbacks following the Thursday matinees (approx. 3:30 p.m.) and Saturday evening shows (approx. 9:30 p.m.)

Cast Conversations following Friday matinees (approx. 3:30 p.m.)

A **Panel Discussion** following the Sunday, August 21, matinee (approx. 3:30 p.m.)

About Chester Theatre Company

Chester Theatre Company (CTC), a professional theatre company located in the foothills of the Berkshires, has been presenting high-quality productions with top-notch actors, directors, and designers from across the country since 1990. Now in its 27th season—the first under the leadership of Producing Artistic Director Daniel Elihu Kramer—CTC produces 4 thought-provoking plays each summer in an intimate setting at Chester's Historic Town Hall on 15 Middlefield Road in Chester, MA. Numerous CTC productions have gone on to Off-Broadway, regional, national and international engagements, among them Kramer's own *Pride@Prejudice*. For further information, please call CTC at 413.354.7770, or visit www.chestertheatre.org.

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