

2025
Jan 17 - Feb 8

program



Kentwood
Players
PRESENTS

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play
house

By the Way, Meet *Vera Stark*

Written By: Lynn Nottage

DIRECTED by
Rondrell McCormick

PRODUCED by
Rhonda Yeager-Hutchinson
and
Julia Sison



LA County
**ARTS &
CULTURE**

01.17 — 02.08.2025

BY THE WAY, MEET VERA STARK is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

Director's Note

What is a stereotype? Webster says it's something conforming to a fixed or general pattern; Especially a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment. Being said, oftentimes the effects from a stereotype or patterned disposition halts humanity from moving forward and/or leaning in at the conversive table. When I think about classism, bigotry, marginalization, implicit/explicit bias, conscious/unconscious bias, etc. etc... I think about all the many micros of stereotomy over hundreds of years that have woven the world's blanket of separation.

By the Way, Meet Vera Stark from my lens is a combination, a complement of two things... An investigation of colorism, misogyny and racism in Hollywood. And it's a love story to all the beautiful shades, colors and textures of Black women throughout history who gave themselves then so that we have ourselves now.

By the Way, Meet Vera Stark takes place in the palette of 1933, 1973 and 2003. Lynn (the playwright) mentions her love for screwball comedies of the 1930s as her entryway into the play. This really sets the pace and grounding for the ideas being explored in the play. I feel the play also uses tragedy, farce, parody, pathos, humor, social commentary, irony and satirical devices to interrogate questions like What happened to those actors of that time? Where are they? Who are they? Why did they?

As the son of a mother who has lived a life of compromise and sacrifice all while loving and giving unmeasurably to the world, I lift up these colossal and iconic Black women. And I hold space, love on, honor and give infinite flowers to allllll Black women. You are the standard. Your light gives hope. It fuels... It heals. Thank You!

Rondrell McCormick
Director

Cast

VERA STARK

GLORIA MITCHELL

LOTTIE/CARMEN

ANNA MAE/AFUA

SLASVICK/BRAD

LEROY/HERB

MAX/PETER

VERA STARK/LOTTIE/

CARMEN/ ANNA MAE/AFUA U.S.

GLORIA MITCHELL U.S.

SLASVICK/BRAD/

MAX/PETER U.S.

LEROY/BRAD U.S.

Denise Milfort

Flannery Maney

Nyoka Boswell

Jazz Strong

Christopher Aruffo

Daniel Tolbert

Charles Kinder

Raevyn Ferguson

Claire Shepard

Chris Morrison

Elijah Green

Setting:

Hollywood 1933, 1973, 2003



Meet the Cast



CHRISTOPHER ARUFFO (He/Him) – Slasvick/Brad

Chris makes his return to Westchester Playhouse, having been seen previously in *All My Sons*. Chris has performed in and directed plays in the US, the UK, and Canada. He is the author of *A Rational Guide to Verse: Scansion Made Simple*, a guide to Shakespearean language; his TEDx talk, explaining why people talk with an accent, can be seen on YouTube.



NYOKA BOSWELL (She/Her) – (Lottie/Carmen)

Nyoka is thrilled to be making her debut with Kentwood Players in the Role of Lottie/Carmen. Nyoka holds an MFA in Acting with a certification in African American Theatre. Nyoka is a member of SAG/AFTRA. A recipient of the AMTC Best Actor Award. Nyoka can be seen in several national commercials including a top campaign opposite David Spade. Nyoka has appeared on several television shows and films. Nyoka has a true passion for theater. Favorite roles include Mamie Till in *The Face of Emmett Till*, Mistress Ford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and Daughter in *Shakin the Mess Outta Misery*. Nyoka says she has a light inside of her that will not leave the world of acting and she would like to thank her husband for always supporting that light.



RAEVYN FERGUSON (She/Her) – Vera/Lottie/Anna Mae/Afua Understudy

Raevyn is a versatile actress whose passion for storytelling began during college with a standout performance as the Lady in Orange in *For Colored Girls*. Since then, she has honed her craft in various theatrical productions such as Tilly Evans in *She Kills Monsters*, building a strong foundation in both drama and comedy. Recently relocating to Los Angeles, Raevyn hit the ground running in expanding her career into film and television, with lead roles in various short films, and a supporting role in the St. Louis-based series *Gonzo*. She looks to use her love of storytelling to increase representation in film and television, while continuing to pursue the art of live performance. With a deep commitment to bringing authentic and compelling characters to life, Raevyn is eager to make a lasting impact in both the theater and entertainment industries.

Meet the Cast



ELIJAH GREEN (He/Him) – Leroy/Herb Understudy

Elijah is a director, writer, and performer based in Compton. He is so excited to be returning to the Kentwood stage after directing this season's production of *Once On This Island* and appearing in last season's production of *Rent*. A graduate of UCLA's Theatre Directing program, Elijah's directing credits include *Pippin*, *Sister Act*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *High School Musical 2*, and his first original musical *Hosanna: A Modern Myth*, co-written alongside two of his dearest friends and adapted for film by Color Box Productions. He would like to thank his community of family and friends for all their love and support. He is so grateful for the opportunity to share this experience with such talented and generous artists, and hopes this story stimulates your soul.

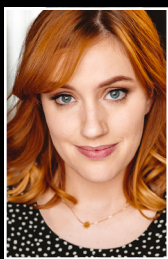


CHARLES TYLER KINDER (He/Him) – Maximillian/ Peter

Watch him as Young McGee in *NCIS*, in Hulu's remake of *White Men Can't Jump*, or briefly opposite Margot Robbie in Damien Chazelle's *Babylon*. His feature film and directorial debut, *ABRAXAS*, is slated for release in 2025. In his free time, Charles enjoys staying active, spending time in nature, and reading-- all while fostering his distrust of the technocratic surveillance state. Charles especially doesn't like the CIA, but admits if they attempted to recruit him would be flattered enough to seriously consider the opportunity, depending on the position and pay of course.



Meet the Cast



FLANNERY MANEY (She/Her) – Gloria Mitchell

Flannery is delighted to be making her debut with Kentwood Players. As a screenwriter, she staffed on HBO's *Hero Inside*, and has collaborated and optioned work with Alloy Entertainment & WB, Loose World Studios, and Creative Edge Entertainment. She is repped by World Builder Entertainment and her work has placed at festivals such as Austin, SCAD, and Hollyshorts. Her film/TV credits include *Mulaney* (Fox), *Buccaneer Galaxy* (Nickelodeon), and *Hail, Caesar!* (Universal Pictures). Some of her favorite theatre credits include *As You Like It* (Celia, Hymen) at the Gielgud Theatre, *Loves Labours Lost* (Costard) with DPTC, and *Gruesome Playground Injuries* (Kayleen) at the Ace Morgan Theater. As a singer, her credits include Pandora Jewelry, Children's Hospital, Nintendo's *On Your Tail*, SyFy's *Chucky*, and Universal's *M3GAN*. Flannery attended Denison University, studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, and is a member of SAG-AFTRA. She'd like to thank her husband Pietro, this incredible cast, our guiding light Rondrell, and Lynn Nottage, for her electrifying words.

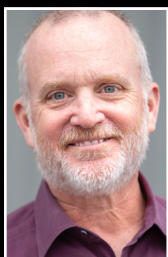


DENISE MILFORT (She/Her) – Vera Stark

Denise's interest in acting began as early as her adolescent years, where she landed lead roles in school productions. She's been on a steady incline after leaving Eastern Connecticut State University, where she studied biology, and moved to Los Angeles. She's appeared as lead in several films, more notably *I Am Not For Sale* opposite Tom Sizemore, *Dead On Arrival*, and *Roots* (2016) with Forest Whitaker, which premiered on A&E and the History Channel. Denise is a major player in the horror film circuit, having done several major films like *HalloWEED Nights* and she's credited on the highly praised *Nine Inch Nails* album by The Fragile. She's proud to do volunteer work with Dental Care for Children, a non-profit which provides free dental care to children in Haiti and in Mexico.



Meet the Cast



CHRIS MORRISON (He/Him) – Maximillian/Peter and Slasvick/Brad Understudy

Chris's previous appearances with Kentwood Players include *Ken Ludwig's Baskerville* and *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*. Chris has also shared his skills with productions at Theatre Palisades and the Morgan-Wixson Theatre. When Chris isn't onstage speaking the words of others, he can often be found onstage reading the minds of others.



CLAIRE SHEPARD (She/Her) – Gloria Understudy

Claire is thrilled to make her Kentwood Players debut in *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark!* She has performed with Contra Costa Musical Theatre (*West Side Story*, *Grease*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, and as Zaneeta Shinn in *The Music Man*), Center REP (Fan/Belinda Cratchit in *A Christmas Carol*), and Pacific Coast Repertory Theatre (*42nd Street* and *My Fair Lady*). Other roles include Sophie in *Mamma Mia!* and Teen Fiona in *Shrek the Musical*. Claire is a proud LMU alum! While there, she studied Acting for the Camera and starred in the student films *Gemini Rising* and *Dear Emma*.



JAZZ STRONG (She/Her) – Anna Mae/Afua

Meet Jazz: a lifelong dancer who's been moving to the rhythm of life since the age of 2. As a globe-trotting flight attendant for a major airline, she thrives on exploring new cultures and collecting stories from around the world. When she's not jet-setting, you'll find her in front of the camera as a model, bringing energy and elegance to print and commercial campaigns. Jazz is a people person through and through—she lights up when meeting new faces and making meaningful connections. Her heart beats for the stage, where she channels her passion for theater, dance, and music into unforgettable performances. A lover of all things creative and coastal, Jazz finds inspiration in beachside sunsets and the endless possibilities of artistic expression. Whether she's dancing, singing, or modeling, Jazz is all about making magic and leaving a lasting impression wherever she goes.

Meet the Cast



DANIEL TOLBERT (He/Him) – Leroy/Herb

Daniel Tolbert was born in Durham, North Carolina. His love for performing led him to pursue a degree in theatre, in which he received his Bachelors of Art from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. At UNC Charlotte, he studied both classical and modern stage theatre techniques, as well as classes focused on acting on camera. Since moving to Los Angeles, Daniel has made several television appearances, most recently as George McJunkin on *Wild West Chronicles*; short films such as *Dream of Aces* & the unreleased *Spiders*; and feature films, including the critically acclaimed heist thriller *Chameleon*. Daniel aspires to keep creating art that is both thought-provoking & entertaining while striving to become one of the world's most prolific and respected actors.



Meet the Production Team

RONDRELL McCORMICK (He/Him) – Director

A director, actor, creator, singer and musician. Classical Directing Fellow of The Old Globe and graduate of the prestigious American Conservatory Theater. Up next- Chester Higgensworth.

RHONDA YEAGER-HUTCHINSON (She/Her) – Producer

From portraying Peter the Goatherder in *Heidi* to Margaret Mead in *Hair* (her absolute favorite role EVER!) Rhonda has enjoyed many different aspects of theatre life. Most recently, at Kentwood, cast as Magistrate in *Fools*. When not on stage Rhonda takes care of the Hospitality side of things at Kentwood - there again enjoying many different aspects of personalities and conversations. Enjoy *By the Way*, *Meet Vera Stark!*

JULIA SISON (She/Her) – Associate Producer

Julia is a Filipino-American performer born and raised in Los Angeles. After 3 years with Kentwood, she is grateful to learn another behind-the-scenes role with the guidance of Lead Producer Rhonda and Director Rondrell. Julia thanks the cast and crew for all their dedication to bring "Vera Stark" to life. She hopes this play will leave an enjoyable and lasting impression with the audience. Julia graduated from AMDA NY and The New School with a BFA in musical theater and film. Please follow her Instagram @jujudafu_ for any future projects.

SHAWN SUMMERER (He/Him) – Sound Design

Shawn is excited to return to the sound booth for *Vera Stark*, his most challenging sound design since *The 39 Steps*. He also previously designed the sound for *The Producers*, *All My Sons*, and *Mame*. Additionally he has designed and build the sets for *Steel Magnolias*, *9 to 5: The Musical*, *California Suite*, *Young Frankenstein*, and *Pippin*. He has also directed three shows at Kentwood including *Dracula*, *The Miracle Worker*, and *Into the Woods*, and will be returning to the director's chair next year for *She Kills Monsters*.

BEN LUPEJKIS (He/Him) – Set Design

By the Way, *Meet Vera Stark* marks Ben's ninth set design for Kentwood Players. Ben has designed several sets for KP, beginning with the musical *Two by Two*. From ark to river cruise ship (*Murder on the Nile*) to the world of a Titanic survivor (*Unsinkable Molly Brown*) to small town Texas (*Sordid Lives*) to radio studio (*It's a Wonderful Life*) to suburban backyard (*All My Sons*) to chic Paris flat (*Private Lives*), Ben enjoyed the challenge of creating three unique settings in one act that had to happen with tight set/scene changes. Welcome to 30's Hollywood (act 1) and 1973 and 2003 (Act 2). Thanks Rondrell and Rhonda for the task.



Production Team

TECH/LEAD LIGHT DESIGN	Michael Thorpe
COSTUMES	Daniel Kruger
HAIR/MAKE-UP	Patty Jarvis
PHOTOGRAPHER/ COSTUMES ASST.	Gloria Ramirez-Plunkett
PROP MASTER	Michele Goffeau
SET DECORATION	Pattie Butler
STAGE MANAGER	Alison Boole
ASST. STAGE MANAGER/ PRODUCTION ASST./ REHEARSAL STAGE MANAGER	Rebecca Wade
AUDITION DESK	Zahra Zaveri
BOOTH OPERATOR	Mikkel Simmons
LIGHTING ASST./ BOOTH OPERATOR	Kelly Gov
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Chris Vanderhorst
ASST. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Anita Martinez
VOICE OF RADIO ANNOUNCER	Greg Abbott
MUSICAL DIRECTOR	Donterell McDuffie

Work Sunday

Gail Bernardi, Alison Boole, Stanley Brown, Mark Bruce-Casares,
Doug Carlson, Michele Goffeau, Sam Goldman,
Margaret Harrington, Patty Jarvis, Cathy Kondreck,
George Kondreck, Daniel Kruger, Ben Lupejkis, Rondrell McCormick,
Melvin Miller, Roy Okida, Kim Peterson, Claire Shepard, Julia Sison,
Jon Sparks, Shawn Summerer, Daniel Tolbert, Michael Thorpe,
Doug Vasquez, Susan Weisberth, Rhonda Yeager-Hutchinson

Special Thanks

Chris Vanderhorst and his assistant, Anita Martinez, for their expertise, time and patience during the location filming; Sylvia Garcia;

The Hutchinson household for hosting the second production and Franklin Hutchinson for being a great bouncer;

El Camino College, Manhattan Beach Community Church, and
Theatre Palisades for costume assistance



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by Terrence McNally

Directed by Aric Martin

May 9 – June 7, 2025

URINETOWN THE MUSICAL

Music by Mark Hollmann

Lyrics by Hollmann and Greg Kotis

Book by Kotis

Directed by Gryphon Seveney

July 18 – August 9, 2025

SHE KILLS MONSTERS

by Qui Nyugen

Directed by Shawn Summerer

September 12 – October 4, 2025

REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES

by Josefina Lopez

Directed by Marco Rivera

November 14 – December 13, 2025

42ND STREET

Music by Harry Warren

Lyrics by Al Dubin

Book by Michael Stewart & Mark Bramble

Directed by Doug Vasquez

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LOVE! VALOUR! COMPASSION!

BY TERENCE MCNALLY

MARCH 14 - APRIL 5

DIRECTED BY ARIC MARTIN

PRODUCED BY MARTIN FELDMAN



COMING
SOON!