



THURSDAY, MAY 18, 2023 AT 9:11PM

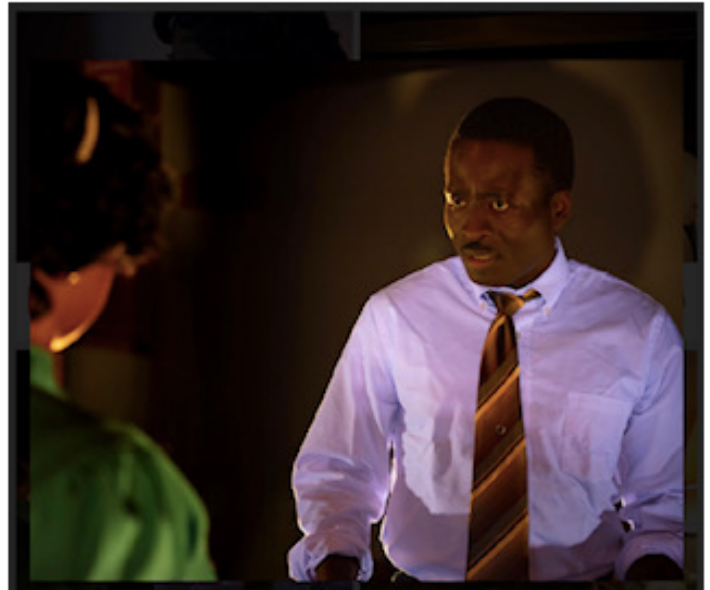
By Cindi Sansone-Braff

Photos by Anthony Noto

Eastline Theatre's Long Island Premiere of "The Mountaintop" is Magnificent

Eastline Theatre is a courageous, innovative, and edgy nonprofit theatre company that aims to create theatrical experiences in unlikely spaces while re-examining the canon, exploring modern plays, and bringing original works to the community's attention. Their latest production, "The Mountaintop," is brilliantly directed by Van-Leon Whitaker and presented in partnership with Westbury Arts, with additional support from the Huntington Arts Council.

"The Mountaintop," an Olivier-Award-winning drama, opened on Broadway in 2011 under the direction of Kenny Leon and featured Samuel L. Jackson and Angela Bassett. This two-character, one-act, 90-minute play is a fictionalized account of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s last evening on Earth.



Kerby Darius

The playwright, Katori Hall, followed Aristotle's three unities of action, time, and place to create dramatic tension. "The Mountaintop" takes place in Room 306 of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, on the eve of Dr. King's assassination. Earlier that day, Dr. King delivered his majestic speech, "I've Been to the Mountaintop." Throughout that speech, he seemed painfully aware that his days were numbered. He mentions asking the Almighty if he could live a few years into the second half of the 20th century. He closed that memorable speech with the ominous words, "I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land."



Hall's characterization of Dr. King reveals his warts and all, and some people might find this offensive. It can be difficult to think of those we publicly admire as mere mortals who wear socks with holes in them, have smelly feet, lie, cheat, chain smoke, and have panic attacks. However, I believe Hall's point is that Dr. King was a man with shortcomings like the rest of us, but he managed to muster up the strength, perseverance, and courage to accomplish what he was destined to do, despite his fears.

The Westbury Arts is an intimate theatre space, and the set for this show, a downtown Memphis motel room, was designed by Michelle Savin and Nicole Savin.



Christen Dekie, Kerby Darius

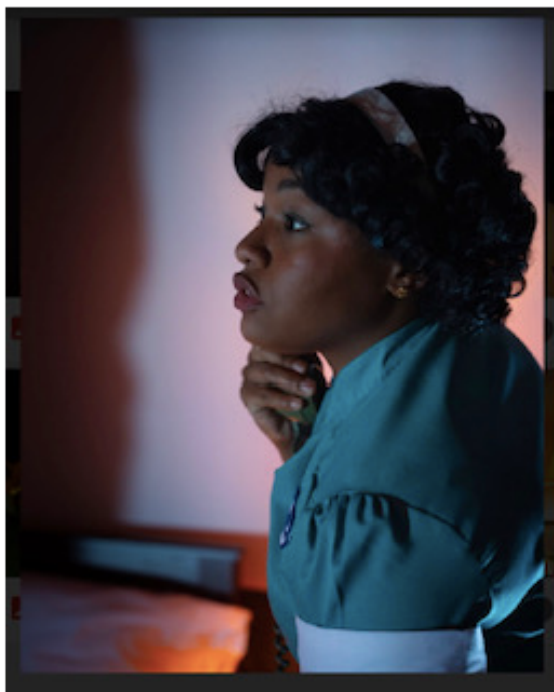
When you enter the theatre, you see a bed, end tables with lamps, a telephone, a small desk, and a chair. The seats, strategically placed around the set, allow the audience to feel like they are sitting in a hotel room with Dr. King on that fateful night.

When Kerby Darius, a commanding and charismatic actor, entered the stage, the audience became fully engrossed by his award-worthy portrayal of Martin Luther King, Jr. The play's opening is memorizing as we watch Dr. King pacing agitatedly around the motel room, talking aloud while writing his next speech, repeating several times, "Why America is going to hell." However, the sparks begin to fly when he orders a coffee from room service, and Camae, a sassy, brassy motel maid, arrives, bringing him a hell of a lot more than he bargained for.

Christen Dekie, as Camae, gave a riveting and unforgettable performance as the sexy, flirtatious motel maid who tells Dr. King, "I cuss worse than a sailor with clap." Camae has one of the most memorable monologues you will ever see on any stage, and Dekie delivered it with so much passion and force that the audience broke out in spontaneous applause.

Entertaining, enthralling, and engaging, don't miss Eastline's electrifying production of "The Mountaintop."

Please note that this show includes discussions of racism, violence, death, sex, and infidelity, and includes racially insensitive language and derogatory terminology, and may not be suitable for all audiences.



Christen Dekie

"The Mountaintop" will play at Westbury Arts through May 28th. Tickets are free with a \$20 refundable reservation at eastline.ludus.com. These reservations are refundable in cash following each performance. More information is available at eastlinetheatre.org or by calling 516-749-5047.