

WILLIAM & MARY THEATRE PRESENTS

By the Way, Meet Vera Stark

Written by
Lynn Nottage

Directed by
Tia James



February 29 - March 2, 2024 at 7:30 PM
March 3, 2024 at 2:00 PM

PBK Memorial Hall
601 Jamestown Road

wm.edu/boxoffice

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Welcome to *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*. This play will take you on a journey through time, exploring the complexities of race, fame, and identity. As the director of this production, it is my honor to guide you through this thought-provoking and captivating story.

I have had the honor and privilege of working on a number of Lynn Nottage's plays. And with every single production I learn, I grow, I laugh, I cry, I am constantly mesmerized by her artistry. Lynn Nottage's play *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*, is a masterful blend of humor, drama, and social commentary. It shines a light on the often overlooked stories of Black actors in Hollywood during the 1930s and beyond. Through the lens of Vera Stark, a talented Black actress, we witness the struggles, triumphs, and sacrifices that she and many others faced in pursuit of their dreams.

In this production, we aim to transport you to a bygone era, immersing you in the glamour and allure of the silver screen. Our talented cast and crew, our phenomenal designers, our entire production team have worked tirelessly to recreate the essence of the 1930s, 1970's and the 2000's, ensuring that every detail reflects the spirit of the time.

But *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* is not just a historical piece; it is a mirror that reflects our present reality. It challenges us to examine the ways in which race and identity continue to shape our society. Through Vera's journey, we are forced to confront the uncomfortable truths that still linger in our world today.

As you watch this play unfold, I encourage you to reflect on the power of storytelling. In an industry that often perpetuates stereotypes and marginalizes certain voices, *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* reminds us of the importance of representation and the need to amplify diverse voices. It is a celebration of resilience, determination, and the human spirit's unyielding desire to be seen and heard.

I am immensely proud of the incredible team that has brought this production to life. Their passion, dedication, and talent have infused every moment with authenticity and depth. Together, we invite you to embark on this journey with us, to laugh, to cry, and to be moved by the extraordinary story of Vera Stark.

Thank you for joining us. May this experience ignite conversations, challenge perceptions, and inspire us all to strive for a more inclusive and equitable world.

With gratitude,
Tia James

DRAMATURG'S NOTE

1933 puts us in the last moments of Pre-Code Hollywood where we saw a more realistic representation of America where Black and white people exist alongside each other. After the Hayes Code was enforced, we see Black actors predominantly in the uncredited roles of nameless cooks and servants, as well as the perpetuation of stereotypes that still exist. Black actors had few options regarding roles, and they were not always supported by their communities, leaving them with a complicated legacy. For many of the Black actors and actresses that inspired this play, their careers are left in the shadows of history, with most scholarship being on their white counterparts. 1973 is where we'd see new and more nuanced roles for Black actors. Blaxploitation films had Black characters now as the leads, but often stereotyped. Like in the 30s, the NAACP wasn't fond of these, concerned again about the representation on-screen for Black people. And then 2003. Two years after Halle Berry was the 1st, and only, African-American actress to win the Oscar for Best Actress in a Leading Role, and Denzel Washington was the 2nd African-American to win Best Actor in a Leading Role since 1963. This is also 64 years after Hattie McDaniel is the first African-American ever to win an Oscar, for her role as Mammy, with Whoopi Goldberg following in 1990.

With the show, we see an overshadowed history highlighted, a void brought to light. I hope that as you are entertained by the immense talent on stage, you also see not only the power of the arts in showcasing our history, but how there is a vast history not talked about that is beyond worth investigating; a history that is more current than we think.

Shiloh Manns

With special thanks to Professor Jacqueline Lawton for her guidance and expertise

By the Way, Meet Vera Stark

By Lynn Nottage

Tia James, Director
Matthew Allar, Scenic Designer
Steve Holliday, Lighting Designer
Shyloh-Symone Bailey, Sound Designer
Jeremy D. Quick, Costume Designer
David Garrett, Technical Director
Ty Richardson, Stage Manager

CAST

Vera Stark	Payton Robinson
Gloria Mitchell.....	Hannah Nieman
Leroy Barksdale, Herb Forrester.....	Joshua Carter
Lottie McBride, Carmen Levy-Green.....	Taylor Coker
Anna Mae Simpkins, Afua Assata Ejobo.....	Mayah Tiwari
Frederick Slasvick, Brad Donovan	Jonathan Aspin
Maximillian Von Oster, Peter Rhys-Davies.....	Nathan Biggart
Radio Announcer, French Documentary Maker	Jake Swery

There will be a 15 minute intermission between Acts I and II.

Please turn off your cell phone and other electronic devices.
Even a lighted screen is a distraction to those around you.

Photographs and recordings are strictly prohibited during this performance.

BY THE WAY, MEET VERA STARK is presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service collection. (www.dramatists.com)

Produced by Second Stage Theatre, New York, 2011 (Carole Rothman, Artistic Director).

Originally commissioned and developed by South Coast Repertory and Center Stage.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant Director.....	Jake Swery
Associate Technical Director	Hal Wenk
Assistant Stage Managers.....	Bobbie Celine Doherty, Livi Greco
Choreographer	Bobbie Celine Doherty
Dramaturg.....	Shiloh Manns
Vocal Coach	Tia James
Song Vocal Coach	Mary Fletcher
Props Supervisor.....	Matthew Allar
Properties Assistant.....	Kathleen Khorn
Scenic Charge Artist	Matthew Allar
Scenic Painters	Madison Aherron, Emily Alberti, Ella Briggs, Deanna Cena, Delaney Crotteau, Kevin Francella, Sebastian Mendoza-Toledo, Kailee Miller, Johanna Pellegrino, Lekha Reddy, Aggie Rigo Saitta, Klara Smith, Anna van Marcke de Lummen
Carpenters and Shop Crew.....	Cypress Ambrose, Madeleine Babcock, Sarah Colatriano, Ciara Curtin, Cecilia Funk, Maddox Kromash, Cassidy Lam, Tyler Milliken, Topher Zane, Maxwell Belmar, Michael Black, Abigail Brown, Wyatt Bussey, Alexa Carmenates, Faith Carpenter, Lu Caudle, Bobbie Celine Doherty, Paetyn Drago, Dean Flynn, Gavin Kelly-Miller, Kathleen Khorn, Matthew Landry, Scarlett Mercier, Emma Owens, Reid Rasmussen, Ty Richardson, Ben Roper, Ava Shephard, Sanya Vukota, Wilson Wicelinski
Show Crew	Bethanne Maynard, Georgia Wensell, Graham Wolford
Electrics Shop Assistant.....	Stella Davies
Assistant Lighting Designer	Coco Zhou
Production Electrician	Sofia Strick
Lightboard Operator	Matthew Gately
Lighting Technicians.....	Temi Abiodun, Saylor Barnes, Nathaniel Callebresi, Jon Geerdes, Abigail Granrud, Colin Hudson, Elliot Lee, Caitlin Lemaster, Freeman Martin, Logan Schnitzius, Gretchen Seegars, Austin Six, William Stanziano, Josh Tessler, Sidney Tolentino, Dylan Villamizar, Andrew Wang, William Welch, True Yuen, Aidan Zimmerman
Soundboard Operator.....	Anna Masters
Cinematographer	Ryan Harp
Film Editor	Jerica Roulo
Costume Shop Manager	Corey Strickland
First Hand.....	Sasha Sklar
Costume Shop Assistants.....	Maddie Cassidy, Sera Hoefler, Melina Llames, Ellen Rowe
Wardrobe Head	Allyson Tham
Hair and Makeup Head.....	Sarah Mahooti
Production Manager.....	Chuck Bayang
Promotions and Box Office Manager.....	Cori Hailey
House Managers.....	Hannah Herzog, Brendan Maynard
Front of House Crew	Jacob Brown, Alyssa Hernandez, Andrew Hoffman, Cassidy Lam, Shiloh Manns, Adeline Steel, Ava Wladar

SPECIAL THANKS

Pam and Chris Groman	Robert Kyle	Jaqueline Lawton	Jordan Stehle
Cabana Creations, LLC	Cedars of Williamsburg Bed & Breakfast		
Roy Peterson and Adam Barger,	Studio for Teaching & Learning Innovation		