



NEW VILLAGE ARTS

MEDIA ALERT

New Village Arts Presents Katori Hall's Gripping Drama

THE MOUNTAIN TOP

Written by Katori Hall

Directed by Durwood Murray

Starring DeAndre Simmons and Taylor Renee Henderson

Running May 23rd through June 22nd, 2025

Previews: May 23rd - May 30th, 2025

Opening Night: Saturday, May 31st, 2025

Dea Hurston Industry Night: Monday, June 16th, 2025

For immediate release: May 18th, 2025

Contact Olivia Pence, Manager of Marketing & Communications: olivia@newvillagearts.org

Carlsbad, CA – New Village Arts (NVA), North County's cultural hub, is thrilled to announce the final show of our 23rd season, **THE MOUNTAIN TOP**, the acclaimed drama by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Katori Hall. Directed by Durwood Murray and starring DeAndre Simmons and Taylor Renee Henderson, this powerful two-hander offers an intimate reimaging of the final night of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s life. **THE MOUNTAIN TOP** is sponsored by K.A. Keller, and will be performed on the Ray Charles Stage in the Conrad Prebys Theatre at the Dea Hurston New Village Arts Center from May 23rd through June 22nd, with previews May 23rd through the 30th, and an opening night reception on Saturday, May 31st, 2025. **THE MOUNTAIN TOP** also introduces NVA's inaugural Dea Hurston Industry Night on Monday, June 16th, 2025.

Taking place on April 3, 1968, an exhausted Dr. King (Simmons) retires to his room at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, TN after delivering one of his most memorable speeches. When a mysterious young hotel worker named Camae (Henderson) delivers room service, what begins



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as a simple conversation evolves into a powerful reflection on legacy, justice, and humanity. Katori Hall's award-winning script blends humor, historical insight, and magical realism to bring a fresh perspective to an American icon.

Making his directorial debut, Durwood Murray will lead the production. Murray has been seen around San Diego theatres for many years, gracing the stages of New Village Arts (he was seen earlier this season as Kris Kringle in *MIRACLE ON 34th STREET: A LIVE MUSICAL RADIO PLAY*), *The Roustabouts*, *Moxie Theatre*, *Diversions* and more. Durwood is also currently the President of the [San Diego Black Artist Collective](#). We are thrilled to bring his unique vision to life:

"In these times, when many of us are feeling minimized, ignored, or even silenced; I take great pride in having the opportunity to tell a story of my people and of my culture. A story to honor those in my family who lived in these times, and assure them that we will follow their lead, and continue this journey they so courageously started." says Durwood Murray, Director.

Murray's creative team is among some of San Diego's finest artistic designers, creating a world of realism and magic combined. Christopher Scott Murillo will be scenic designer, adding to his repertoire of over 15+ NVA productions. Carter Vickers will work with Murillo while designing props and creating the magic elements of the production. Murillo and Vickers have worked on the last three New Village Arts productions together (*THE HALF-LIFE OF MARIE CURIE*, *LA HAVANA MADRID*, and now *THE MOUNTAINTOP*). Kevane La'Marr Coleman will design the costumes and wigs. Coleman most recently costumed NVA's 2023 production of John Patrick Shanley's *DOUBT*. Mashun Tucker (*1222 OCEANFRONT: A BLACK FAMILY CHRISTMAS*) will be the lighting designer, combined with Andre Buck Jr's sound design. Nathan Waits (*LA HAVANA MADRID*, *THE HALF-LIFE OF MARIE CURIE*, and many others) will stage manage the production with Becca More as his assistant stage manager. Greg Ertel will be the master carpenter for the production with Zach Elliot as scenic painter.

DeAndre Simmons will take the stage portraying the legendary Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., while making his New Village Arts debut. Simmons recently won the 2024 Actor of the Year award at the San Diego Theatre Critics Circle 2024 Craig Noel Awards, after his notable performances in *EVERY BRILLIANT THING* (CCA), *SWEENEY TODD* (SDMT), and many more. Simmons will be joined by Taylor Renee Henderson who will portray Camae, the mysterious hotel worker. Henderson was last seen on the NVA stage as Nettie in *THE COLOR PURPLE*. We are thrilled to



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welcome her back to our stage with this piece. The understudies for the production will be announced at a later date.

"I think that doing a piece like 'The Mountaintop' is such a unique gift in the way of... almost Greek tragedy... you know how it eventually ends, but if you're lucky, you see the world that could've been. It's that type of fantastic hope that, as an actor, is both a gift and a feat all its own." says Taylor Renee Henderson.

With this production of THE MOUNTAINTOP, we are thrilled to introduce our new Dea Hurston Industry Nights, an evening dedicated to community, connection, and the celebration of the arts, in collaboration with the [San Diego Black Artist Collective](#). Named in honor of the visionary Dea Hurston, these special performances invite theatre lovers, artists, and supporters to experience the show together, including an engaging talkback discussion with director, Durwood Murray. Guests also enjoy complimentary catered food and drinks, creating a welcoming space for meaningful conversation and artistic reflection. THE MOUNTAINTOP's Industry Night will be held on Monday, June 16, 2025. These nights honor Dea Hurston's enduring legacy of storytelling, equity, and the transformative power of community theatre. Tickets for the Dea Hurston Industry Night will be \$20 each.

This production continues New Village Arts' mission to create adventurous artistic experiences that awaken the human spirit, while providing a collaborative and inspiring home for artists and a forum for community connection and conversation.

New Village Arts Season 23 sponsors include the Prebys Foundation, Jazzercise, Peace Thru Art, Endeavor Bank, US Bank, County of San Diego, City of Carlsbad Cultural Arts Office, Phillips + Co Real Estate, and Visit Carlsbad. *Sponsorship opportunities are available upon request.*

THE CREATIVES of THE MOUNTAINTOP

Durwood Murray	Director
Nathan Waits	Stage Manager
Christopher Scott Murillo[^]	Scenic Designer
Carter Vickers	Props Designer
Kevane La'Marr Coleman	Costume & Wig Designer
Mashun Tucker	Lighting Designer
Andre Buck Jr.	Sound Designer
Becca Moore	Assistant Stage Manager



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Greg Ertel

Master Carpenter

Zach Elliot

Scenic Painter

THE CAST of THE MOUNTAINTOP

DeAndre Simmons

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Taylor Renee Henderson

Camae

^Member of IATSE, United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829

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Previews: May 23-30, 2025

Opening Night: May 31, 2025

May 23 - June 22, 2025

NEW VILLAGE ARTS 23RD SEASON 2024-2025

8-TRACK: THE SOUNDS OF THE '70S

Created by Rick Seeber

Directed by Gerilyn Brault

Music Direction by EY Washington

Choreography by Joy Newbegin

Previews: August 16-23, 2024

Opening Night: August 24, 2024

August 16 - September 15, 2024

SAN DIEGO PREMIERE

THE THANKSGIVING PLAY

Written by Larissa FastHorse

Directed by Daniel Jáquez

Featuring Samantha Ginn as Logan

Previews: October 4-11, 2024

Opening Night: October 12, 2024

October 4 - November 3, 2024



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SAN DIEGO PREMIERE

MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET: A LIVE MUSICAL RADIO PLAY

Adapted by Lance Arthur Smith

Original Songs and Arrangements by Jon Lorenz

Directed by Faith Carrion and Kay McNellen

Previews: November 22-29, 2024

Opening Night: November 30, 2024

November 22 - December 24, 2024

THE HALF LIFE OF MARIE CURIE

Written by Lauren Gunderson

Directed by Kym Pappas

Previews: January 24-31, 2025

Opening Night: February 1, 2025

January 24 - February 23, 2025

SAN DIEGO PREMIERE

Sandra Delgado's LA HAVANA MADRID

Written by Sandra Delgado

Directed by Richard Trujillo

Musical Direction by Carlos Ordiano

Choreography by Tamara Rodriguez & Lilea Alvarez

Previews: March 21-28, 2025

Opening Night: March 29, 2025

March 21 - April 27, 2025

SAN DIEGO PREMIERE

THE MOUNTAINTOP

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Previews: May 23-30, 2025

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May 23 - June 22, 2025

Performance Days and Times



NEW VILLAGE ARTS

Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday Matinees at 2:00pm

Thursday, Friday and Saturday Evenings at 7:30pm

Tickets and Subscriptions

Subscriptions for the season range from \$135 to \$297.

Single Tickets are on sale now.

Single tickets range from \$35 to \$60 for plays and \$40 to \$70 for musicals.

About New Village Arts

Celebrating 24 years of award-winning professional theatre and thriving education and outreach programs, New Village Arts (NVA) has truly become the cultural hub of North County San Diego. NVA attracts more than 30,000 patrons each year to experience professional theatre, music and art events in the heart of Carlsbad Village. In addition to full seasons of plays and musicals featuring some of the best artistic talent in Southern California, NVA hosts talkback discussions and other supplementary events designed to create conversation and cultivate community. New this year, the White Family Next Stage in the Dea Hurston New Village Arts Center presents a series of music, comedy, and spoken word events throughout the year. NVA offers robust theatre programs in partnership with local schools and strongly believes that theatre and arts experiences should be accessible to all people, becoming a recognized leader in equity, diversity, and inclusion in San Diego. NVA has been fortunate to receive support from the City of Carlsbad and other local businesses, who recognize the importance of a resident professional theatre company as a crucial component of an inclusive and creative community. In turn NVA prioritizes serving its community by presenting works that respect its diversity, engaging every citizen with relevant and inspiring stories.

New Village Arts is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization listed under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS.

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