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**AURORA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS
TANYA BARFIELD'S *BLUE DOOR***

*Barfield's brilliant two-hander tells of the legacy of Black men in America
through ancestral visions and music across the generations.*

BERKELEY, CA (March 4, 2024) Aurora Theatre Company launches the penultimate show of its 32nd season with Tanya Barfield's **BLUE DOOR**. **Darryl V. Jones** (*Detroit '67, The Royale*) directs **Michael J. Asberry** (*Paradise Blue, The Incrementalist, The Bluest Eye, Exit Strategy, Satellites*) and **James WDL Mercer II** in this two-hander with music exploring the joy and pain, suffering and resiliency of Black men in America from enslavement and Jim Crow through Black Power.

BLUE DOOR will be presented in-person on Aurora's mainstage from **April 19-May 19 (Opening Night: April 25)**.

Aurora will also offer a week of streaming **BLUE DOOR** performances for audiences to enjoy in their homes. Streaming performances will run concurrently with in-person performances from **May 14-19**.

Director Darryl V. Jones says about the play: "The first time I read **BLUE DOOR** I said, 'This play is about my life.' It mirrors so many of the internal struggles that I have dealt with as part of the first middle-class generation of Blacks to experience the experiment of integration in the Washington, D.C. suburb of Montgomery County, Maryland... The play is a fascinating psychological study heavy on the harsh realities that Black men have faced as a result of

ancestral trauma being passed down from one generation to the next, and a spirituality that connects back to Africa.”

Artistic Director Josh Costello adds: “I’m so pleased to welcome Darryl V. Jones back to Aurora to direct the powerful and beautiful **BLUE DOOR**. Our audiences loved Darryl’s work on *The Royale* and *Detroit ‘67*, and I know his perspective and talents will make for an insightful and passionate production.”

SYNOPSIS: Tanya Barfield’s two-man play, **BLUE DOOR**, puts Lewis, a high-achieving Black mathematics professor, in conversation with three generations of his ancestors over the course of a fevered dream or night of sleepless delusion as he wrestles with his own sense of self and cultural identity. Estranged from his white wife, who accuses him of being out of touch with his heritage for refusing to attend the Million Man March, Lewis must journey through the past in order to determine his future. The ancestral visitations he receives call upon joy and pain, suffering and resiliency, music and song to situate Lewis in a long lineage of Black men in America from enslavement and Jim Crow to Black Power.

The *Los Angeles Times* declared Barfield’s play “**Intelligent...unfailingly thought-provoking...Barfield poses sharp questions and counter-questions on contemporary black identity. Her vision is fearless and humane.**”

Post-show discussions for **BLUE DOOR** will be led by Aurora staff or members of the Creative Team, and hosted after the show on the following days: **Friday, April 26; Tuesday, April 30; Friday, May 3** (in conjunction with a Community Night event); **Wednesday, May 8; Thursday, May 14**. Aurora INsights, an in-depth conversation about themes of the play offered to Aurora donors of any level, will be held at 4 p.m. on **Saturday, May 11**.

MANAHATTA Cast and Creative Team

Tanya Barfield (she/her) is a playwright, screenwriter, and Julliard faculty member whose works have been presented both nationally and internationally. Select plays include: *The Call* (premiered at Playwrights Horizons in co-production with Primary Stages), *Blue Door* (nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and AUDELCO Award and was seen at numerous theaters around the country), *Of Equal Measure* (Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles and was nominated for an NAACP Image Award), and the book for the Theatreworks/USA children’s musical: *Civil War: The First Black Regiment*. Barfield’s writing for television includes work for HBO, Showtime, and FX, where she received her first television writing credit during Season 4 of *The Americans*. For her work on *The Americans* and FX/Hulu’s *Mrs. America*, Barfield shares two Writers Guild of America Awards.

Barfield was a recipient of the 2003 Helen Merrill Award for Emerging Playwrights, a 2005 Honorable Mention for the Kesselring Prize for Drama, a 2006 Lark Play Development/NYSCA grant, a 2013 Lilly Award, and she has twice been a finalist for the Princess Grace Award. She has been commissioned by Playwrights Horizons, Center Theatre Group, South Coast Repertory, Primary Stages, and Geva Theatre Center. She is a member of New Dramatists and serves on the membership committee at The Dramatist Guild.

Darryl V. Jones (he/him) returns to Aurora, where he directed *Detroit '67* (2018), and directed and co-choreographed its award-winning production of *The Royale* (2017). Other directing credits include *The Great Khan* (San Francisco Playhouse), *Kill Move Paradise* (Shotgun Players), *The Minneola Twins* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre), *Gem of the Ocean* (Sacramento Theatre Co.), *The Brothers Size* (Theatre Rhinoceros), and many more regional and off-Broadway productions. Following *Blue Door*, Jones will direct *Choir Boy* at Shotgun Players in summer 2024. He is a Professor Emeritus at Cal State East Bay.

Michael J. Asberry (he/him) is back in the familiar Aurora confines, where he previously appeared in *Paradise Blue* (2023), *The Incrementalist* (2022), *The Bluest Eye* (2021), *Exit Strategy* (2019), and *Satellites*. Regional and National Theatre credits include Cal Shakes; Marin Theatre Company; Orlando Shakes (Orlando, FL); Sacramento Theatre Company; San Francisco Shakespeare Festival; San Francisco Mime Troupe; American Conservatory Theatre; Center REpertory Company; Capital Stage; Artists Repertory Theatre (Portland, OR); Lorraine Hansberry Theatre; TheatreWorks; and the 6th Street Playhouse. Film appearances include *A Christmas Mystery*, *San Andreas*, *FreeByrd*, and *Mr. Incredible and Pals*. Television credits include *Chance*, *Trauma*, and *Nash Bridges*. Michael has voiceover spots with Pixar Animation, Pine Sol, and Clorox, and appears as characters in the video games *Watchdogs 2* and *Battlefield Vietnam*.

James WDL Mercer II (they/them) is a theater artist and visual artist originally from Philly-adjacent, performing at Aurora for the first time. Other Bay Area and regional theater credits include A.C.T., Berkeley Repertory Theatre, African-American Shakespeare Company, Irish Rep, and Arden Theatre Company. Mercer has also worked as a nationally touring physical theater artist with Theater Unspeakable based in Chicago, and has workshopped plays with A.C.T., Penumbra, National Black Theatre, Playwrights Foundation, and Berkeley Repertory Theatre's Ground Floor. Mercer studied with Steppenwolf Group 21 and holds an MFA from American Conservatory Theater.

The understudy for **BLUE DOOR** will be **Ron Chapman (he/him)**.

The creative team for **BLUE DOOR** includes **Ray Archie (he/him)** - Sound Designer;

Brooke Cox (they/she) - Assistant Stage Manager; **Cheryle Honerlah (she/they)** - Rehearsal Stage Manager; **Eric Daniel Johnson (he/him)** - Lead Props; **Stephanie Anne Johnson (she/her)** - Lighting Designer; **Kitty Muntzel (she/her)** - Costume Designer; **Scott Reardon (he/him)** - Performance Stage Manager; **Phaedra Tillery-Boughton (she/her)** - Directing Fellow; **Hector Zavala (they/them)** - Scenic Designer.

CALENDAR EDITORS

Aurora Theatre Company continues its 32nd season with **BLUE DOOR** by **Tanya Barfield**. **Darryl V. Jones** directs this two-hander exploring the joy and pain, suffering, and resiliency of Black men in America from enslavement and Jim Crow through Black Power.

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DATES

Previews: Friday 4/19 and Saturday 4/20 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, 4/21 at 2 p.m.

Tuesday, 4/23 and Wednesday, 4/24 at 7 p.m.

Open: Thursday, April 25 at 8 p.m. (PRESS NIGHT)

Close: Sunday, May 19 at 2 p.m.

Shows: IN-PERSON PERFORMANCES (April 19-May 19):

Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m.

Two performances per week (WEDNESDAY evenings and SUNDAY matinees) are designated mask-required performances. For all other performances, masks will be encouraged but not required.

Aurora's policy will apply to everyone inside the building other than the actors, including all audience, ushers, and staff.

Learn more about Aurora's updated COVID-19 Infectious Disease Policy at auroratheatre.org/covid19safety.

STREAMING PERFORMANCES (May 14-19):

Each performance is presented as a filmed production for audiences to enjoy in their homes.

Each performance is available for 36 hours, from 12 p.m. on the performance date to midnight the following day.

TICKETS

For single tickets (\$20-\$65), or subscriptions and flex passes (\$102-\$310), the public can call **(510) 843-4822** or visit www.auroratheatre.org.

PRESS

Please do not reply to this media advisory for review tickets. Press review invites will be sent to selected media.

ABOUT AURORA THEATRE COMPANY

As the storyteller for our community, Aurora Theatre Company inspires new audiences and longtime theatre lovers alike with the visceral power of live theatre. Our venues, the most intimate professional stages in the Bay Area, highlight great acting, nuanced language, and an immediacy that makes for exhilarating theatre. By telling deeply relevant stories, we're building a new culture of theatregoing in the Bay Area and contributing to a revitalization of theatre nationwide, challenging all of us to think deeper, laugh louder, and engage more purposefully and profoundly with our neighbors and our world. Aurora has an operating budget of \$2.3 million.

Aurora Theatre Company gratefully acknowledges Associate Season Sponsors: Craig & Kathy Moody. Sponsors: Tom & Amy Worth. Associate Sponsors: Rosalind & Sung-Hou Kim, Helen Marcus.

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