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Profile Theatre Press Contact:

Jen Mitas, PR Consultant

jenmitas@gmail.com

(503) 804-2402



LAS MENINAS

WRITTEN BY

LYNN NOTTAGE

DIRECTED BY

DAWN MONIQUE WILLIAMS



AVAILABLE AT PROFILETHEATRE.ORG ON DECEMBER 2ND

**Profile Theatre presents Lynn Nottage's *Las Meninas* as part of their
Fall 2020 ON AIR programming**

A Reconsideration of the True Scandal that Scandalized the Court of Louis XIV

"Irreverent, caustic and touching, Nottage weaves an imaginative tale based on a fascinating but forgotten time." - Helen Hayes, [Theatre Washington](#)

PORTLAND, OREGON. November 16, 2020- On December 2, Profile Theatre will release the third and final audio play of their Fall 2020 season. Set in the court of Louis XIV, ***Las Meninas*** tells the "probably true story" of the Spanish Queen Marie-Thérèse, and her affair with Nabo Sensugali, a Little Person from Dahomey. Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lynn Nottage imagines the story through the eyes of Nabo and Marie-Thérèse's daughter, exiled to a nunnery. Nottage's vivid imagining of this forgotten bit of Baroque history reveals contemporary truths about race and asks us to consider whose stories are either erased from history, or never recorded at all?

Profile's production is directed by **Dawn Monique Williams**, known for her vivid reimaginings of canonical plays at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Williams is thrilled to direct Lynn Nottage's "sumptuous" play. Williams says, "What I love about *Las Meninas* is that it's inspired by the real life of a woman of presumed mixed racial heritage and she's written with intelligence, grace,

poetry, and is the heart of a wild tragic-comedy. The play is based on a Black nun in France who was rumored to be the child of the Queen and Queen's lover: Nabo, the African court jester who had dwarfism." Williams is excited to bring her deep love of language to bear on this production, which she notes, "would be a visual feast (and cost a lot of money) if we were staging it, but the gift of this time is we can make it a sumptuous feast for the ears."

Dawn Monique Williams recently directed *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Profile audiences may remember her direction of the Five Lesbian Brothers' *The Secretaries* in 2018 (Willamette Week's Best Portland Theatre Production of 2018). **Lauren Modica** (who plays Louise Marie-Therese) was last seen at Profile in *The Antigone Project*, and last in Portland as Mrs. Jennings in Bedlam's *Sense & Sensibility* and Mary Bennet in *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* (Portland Center Stage). **Stacy Ross**, who plays Mother Superior/ Queen Mother, is a Bay Area actor who recently collaborated with Williams on *Bull in a China Shop* at the Aurora theatre in Berkeley. Queen Marie-Therese is played by **Crystal Muñoz** who last worked with Profile in *Water by the Spoonful*, *The Happiest Song Plays Last*, *Orlando*, and *Eyes For Consuela*. **Chris Murray** plays King Louis XIV. His previous credits at Profile include: *In The Wake*, *The Antigone Project*, Sam Shepard - *Festival of One Acts*, *A Few Stout Individuals*, *The Sisters Rosensweig* and *Six Degrees of Separation*. **Rance Nix**, who is [reprising the role of Nabo Sensugali](#), is an actor based in New York City working on various internet and new media projects. Most recently, he spoofed the Netflix hit show *Love is Blind* by creating and hosting an Instagram version with his roommate called *Love is Quarantine*. The roles of Painter and Doctor are played by **Michael J. Asberry** who most recently appeared in *The Rotten Orchard* with the San Francisco Mime Troupe. La Valliere and Lady Servant are played by **Claire Rigsby** who was last seen at Profile in *The Secretaries*. Sound design and original music will be by **Matt Wiens**, whose recent work includes Profile's *The Baltimore Waltz*, *Well*, and *Let Me Down Easy*. **Bobby Brewer Wallins** (*The Revolutionists*, *A Doll's House Part 2*, *Everybody*, *Magellanica*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and *A Civil War Christmas* at Artists Rep) will create costume designs that listeners can view online.

Profile Theatre Artistic Director Josh Hecht notes, "*Las Meninas* is the perfect play for the dark winter months - a period piece that's equal parts juicy royal scandal and poignant exploration of race, power and love. The first draft alone transported me. I'm so glad to welcome Dawn Monique Williams back to Profile for her third production with us. Her keen insightfulness and love of sound has made for an elegant, sophisticated - and at times bawdy! - aural experience."

In November, Profile will also be releasing the first episodes of their podcast **SATELLITE**, which will be the home for artist features, panel discussions, readings and concerts relevant to the audio plays. Stay tuned for more details of individual episodes.

DATES

Las Meninas will be available for free and unlimited listening exclusively for Profile Theatre members only December 2, 2020 - January 5, 2021 at <https://profiletheatre.org/hot-n-throbbing>

MEMBERSHIPS

Memberships are on sale for \$150 at profiletheatre.org/membership. Benefits include exclusive access to *Las Meninas*, behind the scenes content and unlimited free admission for one to any in-person performances they are able to produce through June 2021. For more information, contact the Box Office at boxoffice@profiletheatre.org or (503) 242-0080.

ABOUT THE 2020-2021 SEASON

Las Meninas is part of PROFILE'S 2020-2021 Season program **ON AIR**. While COVID-19 limits public gatherings, Profile will share virtual content that highlights three playwrights featured in GENERATIONS: Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Lynn Nottage and Paula Vogel. Profile is also offering two new podcast series. **Community Profile: Voices from the Real World**, will feature interviews and writing by participants in Profile's affinity spaces for LGBTQIA+ people and Black Women to cultivate their creative voices with award-winning writing mentors. Additionally, Profile will present **Satellite: Beyond the Page**, a podcast full of bonus content including concerts, artist interviews and feature stories that will give audiences a chance to go deeper into the themes of the audio plays and their featured playwrights as they play out in the greater Portland area. Audiences can expect additional program announcements in November 2020 and February 2021.

ABOUT Lynn Nottage— PLAYWRIGHT is a playwright and a screenwriter, and the first-and-only woman to have been awarded the Pulitzer Prize twice. Her plays have been produced widely in the United States and throughout the world. Her most recent play, *Mlima's Tale*, premiered at the Public Theater in May 2018. In the spring of 2017, *Sweat* (Pulitzer Prize, Obie Award, Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Tony Nomination, Drama Desk Nomination) moved to Broadway after a sold out run at The Public Theater. It premiered and was commissioned by Oregon Shakespeare Festival/Arena Stage. Other plays include *By The Way, Meet Vera Stark* (Lilly Award, Drama Desk Nomination), *Ruined* (Pulitzer Prize, Obie, Lucille Lortel, New York Drama Critics' Circle, Audelco, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Award), *Intimate Apparel* (American Theatre Critics and New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards for Best Play), *Fabulation, or The Re-Education of Undine* (Obie Award), *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, *Las Meninas*, *Mud, River, Stone*, *Por'knockers* and *POOF!*. Upcoming premieres include an opera version of *Intimate Apparel* and *MJ the Musical*, a Broadway musical, featuring the music of Michael Jackson.

Nottage is the recipient of a MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship, Steinberg "Mimi" Distinguished Playwright Award, PEN/Laura Pels Master Playwright Award, Merit and Literature Award from The Academy of Arts and Letters, Columbia University Provost Grant, Doris Duke Artist Award, among others. She is an Associate Professor in the Theatre Department at Columbia School of the Arts.

ABOUT Dawn Monique Williams— *Las Meninas* DIRECTOR

Dawn Monique Williams is an American theatre director. In 2016, Williams was awarded a Princess Grace Foundation,(USA) Fellowship award in theatre. This Fellowship supported her 2017 production of *Merry Wives of Windsor*, at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. From 2014-2016 Williams was in residence at OSF on a Leadership U Grant administered through the Theatre Communications Group and funded by the Mellon Foundation. Williams served as the 2013 Phil Killian Directing Fellow at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, which is home to America's first practical Elizabethan Stage. Williams was a 2011 Directing Fellow of the Drama League of New York, one of four directors selected for the fall Directors' Project. She was Resident Director for the now defunct Aces Wild Theatre, a touring company regularly taking productions to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Her production of Lisa D'Amour's *Anna Bella Eema* traveled to the Fringe in 2008, and a production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* played the festival in August 2010. She is the former Associate Artistic Director for Berkeley's Impact Theatre.

Williams spent several years as an adjunct faculty member in the Theatre and Dance Department at California State University, East Bay where, in November 2012, she directed the U.S. English premiere of the award-winning play *NN12*, by Gracia Morales. A poet, author, and scholar, frequently lecturing on contemporary Shakespeare performance, Williams contributed to *Shakespeare, Race, and Performance: The Diverse Bard* (2016), edited by Delia Jarrett-Macauley.

In addition to her work with Aces, and Impact, Williams has worked at Woman's Will, Hampshire Shakespeare Company, the Hayward Greek Festival, the San Francisco Young Playwrights Festival, California Conservatory Theatre, Chester Theatre, New World Theater and has assisted at the leading regional theatres Oregon Shakespeare Festival (Ashland, Oregon), Hartford Stage (Hartford, Connecticut), Shakespeare & Company (Lenox, Massachusetts), TheatreWorks (Palo Alto, California), and California Shakespeare Theater (Berkeley, California). Her passion is Shakespearean classics, heightened language plays, and magic/heightened realism, which is evident in these select directing credits: *The Winter's Tale*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Scapin the Cheat*, *Sleepy*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Children of Eden*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Burial at Thebes*, *My California*, *Medea*, *Trojan Women*, *In the Blood*, and *La Ronde*.

ABOUT PROFILE THEATRE

Founded in 1997, Profile Theatre quickly established itself as a leading voice in Portland's cultural scene. In 2010, Profile was awarded the inaugural New National Theatre Company Award from the American Theatre Wing, designed to bring national attention to "the most inspiring and innovative theatre companies on our national landscape." Profile has twice been recognized by Advance Gender Equity in the Arts for its leadership in the field, and its Diversity and Inclusion Initiative has been profiled in HowlRound. The 2018–2019 season was Hecht's first fully programmed season as Artistic Director and included the commission and world premiere of *(Un)Conditional* by National Medal of Arts Awardee Ping Chong + Company, a community-invested work amplifying the themes of the Lisa Kron / Anna Deavere Smith season, and brought Lisa Kron to Portland for a week-long Playwright's Residency where she developed

the film script for *Fun Home*, led a writing workshop for community members and gave a performance of some of her solo work on the Profile stage.

Profile's 2019–2020 season used their unique mission to dedicate their season to an in-depth exploration of a playwright's vision with the first season of *Generations*; a two-season exploration of plays from Nottage, Vogel and Jacob-Jenkins's three different generational vantage points. The mainstage productions of Nottage's *Sweat* (directed by Christopher Acebo) and Vogel's *Indecent* and *Baltimore Waltz* (both directed by Josh Hecht) were all lauded by local critics. Their production of Nottage's *By The Way, Meet Vera Stark* (directed by Chip Miller) and Branden Jacobs-Jenkins's Playwrights Residency in Portland and public performance, scheduled for May and June 2020, were both canceled due to the pandemic. In June 2020, the company released its first serial audio play *Claudia, A Viral Love Story*. Based on a COVID-inspired "recipe" of playwriting "ingredients" provided by Pulitzer Prize-winner *Paula Vogel*, and written by an astounding group of nine playwrights and screenwriters. This original audio play was released for free and can be played via Profile's website and on popular podcast apps.

*For additional bios or to arrange interviews with artists, please contact PR Consultant Jen Mitas. For more information, visit profiletheatre.org or call 503.242.0080.

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