

CENTER REPERTORY COMPANY PRESENTS

## SWEAT

By Lynn Nottage

Directed by Elizabeth Carter

**March 25 – April 16, 2023** (opening night: March 28)  
LESHER CENTER FOR THE ARTS, WALNUT CREEK

WALNUT CREEK, CA (23 February 2023) — **Center Repertory Company** will present **Lynn Nottage's** Pulitzer Prize-winning *SWEAT*, directed by acclaimed actor/director **Elizabeth Carter**. This searing play, called “a superb, vital contribution to contemporary drama that could not be more timely” (*New York Times*), follows a group of friends who have spent their lives working together on the factory floor, sharing drinks, secrets, and laughs. When layoffs and picket lines begin to chip away at their trust, lifelong companions become combatants in a heart-wrenching fight to stay afloat. Race, class, and friendship collide in this explosive drama. *SWEAT* will perform **March 25 – April 16, 2023** at the Leshar Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr, Walnut Creek. For tickets (\$45-\$70) and more information, the public may visit [LesharArtsCenter.org](http://LesharArtsCenter.org) or call the box office at **(925) 943-7469** (open Wed-Sun, 12:00pm-6:00pm).

Commissioned by Oregon Shakespeare Festival's American Revolutions: The United States History Cycle and Arena Stage, *SWEAT* made its World Premiere at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. After a sold-out run at New York's The Public Theater, the play transferred to Broadway, where it was nominated for the Tony Award for Best Play. *SWEAT* won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and has been performed at leading theatres across the country. *The New York Times* called *SWEAT* “extraordinarily moving” and *Time Out New York* declared it “passionate and necessary...a masterful depiction of the forces that divide and conquer us.” *The Mercury News* says Nottage “unerringly captures the fury of the disenfranchised. *SWEAT* chronicles the end of an era in America.”

**Center Repertory Company** offers Pay What You Can tickets (suggested price of \$25) for the March 25 & 26 preview performances of *SWEAT*, increasing access to theatre and inviting audiences to see the show at whatever price they can afford. ASL interpretation for deaf and hard of hearing patrons is offered at the 2:30 pm performance on Sunday, April 16, 2023.

For this production, Center REP has assembled an outstanding cast and creative team for this production:

**Cathleen Riddley** plays Cynthia, an African American factory worker interested in becoming a manager. Riddley is a multiple award-winning Bay Area actor who has performed at American Conservatory Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Magic Theatre, San Francisco Playhouse, California Shakespeare Theater, Aurora Theatre Company, Shotgun Players, and Oakland Theater Project (Ubuntu Theater Project). She is also a member of Making Good Trouble, a cohort of theatre artists in partnership with Authentic Arts & Media, whose goal is to empower Bay Area artists and staff to become anti-racism trainers, as well as a company member with Shotgun Players, TheatreFIRST and PlayGround.

Seen in Center REP's *Arms and the Man*, **Lisa Anne Porter** returns as Tracey, a white factory worker who is friends with Cynthia. Porter has performed throughout the country with companies including the American Conservatory Theater, California Shakespeare Theater, Aurora Theatre Company, Marin Theatre Company, Magic Theatre, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Shakespeare/Santa Cruz, Shakespeare Festival/LA, San Francisco Playhouse, BRAVA Theatre Center, Shakespeare & Company, Syracuse Stage, Sacramento Theatre Company, GeVa Theatre Company, and Boston Theatre Works. Prior to the closing of the MFA program at the American Conservatory Theatre, Lisa served as the Head of Acting and Dialects, and earlier as the Head of Voice, Text, and Dialects. She has also served on the faculties of Syracuse University, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, Stanford University, San Francisco State University, and many other institutions.

Seen in Center REP's *Enchanted April* and *Witness for the Prosecution*, **Maryssa Wanlass** plays Jessie, a white friend of Cynthia and Tracey. Wanlass is an actor, director, and educator, with an emphasis on social justice and classical theatre. They have performed with San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, California Shakespeare Theater, San Jose Stage Company, Livermore Shakespeare Festival, and *Woman's Will*. They have directed locally for Utopia Theatre Project, PlayGroundSF, Shotz, and regionally for Advice to the Players. Wanlass' social justice work includes directing at-risk young adults in Shakespeare plays with the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival and working with Red Ladder Theatre to deliver improv workshops in California's correctional system.

Seen in Center REP's *Red Speedo*, **Michael J. Asberry** returns as Brucie, Cynthia's estranged husband and Chris' father. Asberry has performed with American Conservatory Theater, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, San Francisco Mime Troupe, Aurora Theatre Company, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Sacramento Theatre Company, Capital Stage, Artists Repertory Theatre, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, and the 6th Street Playhouse. Film appearances include *San Andreas*, *FreeByrd*, *Mr. Incredible and Pals*, *Chasing Rodriguez*, and *Portable Storage*. Television credits include "Chance" (Hulu), "Trauma" (NBC), and "Nash Bridges" (CBS). Asberry has recorded voiceover spots for Pixar Animation, Pine Sol, Sweetos, General Motors, and Electronic Arts.

**Robert Parsons** makes his Center REP debut as Stan, a bartender who formerly worked in the factory. Parsons has appeared on leading Bay Area stages including American Conservatory Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Magic Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, Shotgun Players, San Francisco Playhouse, Marin Theatre Company, Word for Word, Cutting Ball and San Jose Stage Company. Regionally, he's been seen at Ford's Theatre, Ahmanson Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Huntington Theatre Company, Alley Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, and The Sydney Festival. Film Credits include *Freaky Tales*, *Fairyland*, *Freeland*, *Interview with Traveler #582*, *Sunday Errand*, and *Prufrock*.

After debuting in Center REP's *Clue*, **David Everett Moore** returns as Evan, a parole officer. Moore is a longtime Bay Area artist who has worked with many local theaters, including Crowded Fire, Aurora Theatre, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Marin Theatre Company, Marin Shakespeare Company, African-American Shakespeare Company, Perspective Theater Company, SPARC, and Word for Word, among others. Regional credits include work with Capital Stage Company, Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, and Colorado Shakespeare Festival. Moore is a Resident Artist of the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival.

**Roman Anthony Gonzalez** makes his Center REP debut as Oscar, a Colombian American man who works at the bar. Studying with Ohlone College Theater, Gonzalez works with Red Ladder Theatre Company to provide improv training to incarcerated individuals and recently appeared in the film *Fairyland*.

**Adam KuveNiemann** makes his Center REP debut as Jason, Tracey's son who lost his job at the factory. His other theatre credits include shows with American Conservatory Theater, Z Space, Aurora Theatre Company, New Conservatory Theatre Center, and Berkeley Repertory Theatre. KuveNiemann also co-hosts the podcast "Green Eggs... and Man?", a wild, improvisatory ride through Dr. Seuss' breakfast-themed classic.

**Eddie Ewell** makes his Center REP debut as Chris, Cynthia's son who works at the factory and aspires to attend college. He has performed onstage at American Conservatory Theater, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Marin Theatre Company, San Jose Stage Company, Shotgun Players, Playwrights Foundation, TheatreFIRST, and African-American Shakespeare Company.

*SWEAT* features scenic design by **Kelly James Tighe**, costume design by **Becky Bodurtha**, sound design by **Cliff Caruthers**, lighting design by **Kevin Myrick**, props design by **Alyssa Tryon**, and fight direction by **David Maier**. **Jeunée Simon** serves as intimacy consultant.

**Lynn Nottage** (she/her) is a playwright and a screenwriter. She is the first, and remains the only, woman to have won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama twice. Her plays have been produced widely in the United States and throughout the world. Recently, Nottage received Tony Award nominations for the book of Broadway's *MJ the Musical* and for her play *Clyde's* performed on Broadway at Second Stage Theater. An opera adaptation of her play *Intimate Apparel* was presented at Lincoln Center Theater. Her play *Ruined* won the Pulitzer Prize, Obie, Lucille Lortel, New York Drama Critics' Circle, Audelco, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Awards. She won the Lilly Award and received a Drama Desk nomination for her play *By The Way, Meet Vera Stark*. She won the American Theatre Critics and New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards for Best Play for her play *Intimate Apparel*. Her other work includes, *Floyd's* (retitled- *Clyde's*); *Mlima's Tale*; the OBIE Award-winning *Fabulation, or The Re-Education of Undine*; *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*; *Las Meninas*; *Mud, River, Stone*; *Por'knockers*; and *POOF!*. She wrote the book for the musical adaptation of Sue Monk Kidd's novel *The Secret Life of Bees*, with music by Duncan Sheik and lyrics by Susan Birkenhead, which performed at The Atlantic Theater. She is the co-founder of the production company, Market Road Films. Over the years, she has developed original projects for Amazon, HBO, Sidney Kimmel Entertainment, Showtime, This is That, and Harpo. She was a writer and producer on the Netflix series "She's Gotta Have It," directed by Spike Lee and a consulting producer on the third season of "Dickinson" (Apple TV+). Nottage's awards and honors include the MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship, Steinberg "Mimi" Distinguished Playwright Award, PEN/Laura Pels Master Playwright Award, William Inge Festival Distinguished Playwright, TIME 100 (2019), National Black Theatre Fest's August Wilson Playwriting Award, and a Guggenheim Grant. Nottage is a board member for BRIC Arts Media Bklyn, Donor Direct Action, Dramatist Play Service, Second Stage and the Dramatists Guild. She recently completed a three-year term as an Artist Trustee on the Board of the Sundance Institute. She is member of The Dramatists Guild, WGAE, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is currently an artist-in-residence at the Park Avenue Armory.

**Elizabeth Carter** (Director) is a Bay Area actor/director. Her directing credits include *Stoop Stories* at Aurora Theatre Company; the virtual production of *Feel the Spirit* for Shotgun Players and Colt Coeur;

San Francisco Shakespeare Festival's 2020 groundbreaking virtual *King Lear; Bondage* (Honorable Mention for the Relentless Award) with AlterTheater; *Every 28 Hours Plays* and *A Place to Belong* with American Conservatory Theater; *for colored girls...* (Broadway World Best Local Play and TBA nominee Best Ensemble) with African-American Shakespeare Company; and *Participants* (TBA Best Anthology) for TheatreFIRST. Later this season she will be directing *Steel Magnolias* at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley. She has directed numerous productions for California Shakespeare Theater Conservatory and has served as the Associate Director of the Theatre Department at Ruth Asawa School of the Arts in San Francisco. As an actor, she was nominated for both San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle (SFBATCC) and TBA Awards for her performance in Marin Theatre Company's *The Convert*, received an SFBATCC Award nomination for her performance in Aurora Theatre Company's *Wittenburg*, and has appeared onstage at California Shakespeare Theater, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, and Lorraine Hansberry Theatre. She is a recipient of the Bridging the Gap Grant from Shotgun Players and a Director's West 2019 Alum. Carter is the Inaugural SDCF Lloyd Richards New Futures Resident Director at Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

### **About Center Repertory Company**

**Center REP** is the resident professional theatre company of the Leshner Center for the Arts. Its season consists of six productions—a variety of classic and contemporary musicals, dramas, and comedies, presented with artistic excellence and high professional standards. Center REP's mission is to celebrate the power of the human imagination by producing emotionally engaging, intellectually involving, and visually astonishing live theatre, and through Outreach and Education programs, to enrich and advance the cultural life of the communities it serves. As a producing theatre, its presentations are conceived and developed at the Leshner Center. Whether the production is a Bay Area premiere or a Shakespearean classic, each is devised to be a one-of-a-kind, artistic creation offering a unique theatre experience for audiences.

### **FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

**WHAT:** **Center Repertory Company** will present **Lynn Nottage's** Pulitzer Prize-winning *SWEAT*, directed by acclaimed actor/director **Elizabeth Carter**. This searing play, called "a superb, vital contribution to contemporary drama that could not be more timely" (*New York Times*), follows a group of friends who have spent their lives working together on the factory floor, sharing drinks, secrets, and laughs. When layoffs and picket lines begin to chip away at their trust, lifelong companions become combatants in a heart-wrenching fight to stay afloat. Race, class, and friendship collide in this explosive drama.

**WHEN:** Previews: Saturday, March 25 – Sunday, March 26, 2023  
*Opening: Tuesday, March 28, 2023*  
Closing: Saturday, April 16, 2023

ASL interpreted performance: 2:30pm Sunday, April 16, 2023

**SHOWS:** Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays: 7:30pm  
Saturdays: 2:30pm & 7:30pm  
Sundays: 2:30pm & 7:00pm

**WHERE:** Leshher Center for the Arts (1601 Civic Dr, Walnut Creek)

**TICKETS:** For tickets (\$45-\$70) or more information, the public may visit [www.lesherartscenter.org](http://www.lesherartscenter.org) or call the box office at (925) 943-7469 (*open Wed-Sun, 12:00-6:00pm*).

*Pay What You Can tickets (suggested price of \$25) are available for performances on March 25 & 26, 2023.*

**-30-**

**PRESS:** Contact Lauren Goldfarb, Carla Befera & Co.  
[lauren@cb-pr.com](mailto:lauren@cb-pr.com)

**PHOTOS:** Downloadable high-res photos are available: <http://cbpr.co/press/sweat>