

Media Contact:

Alicia Grasso, Marketing Director
(609) 884-1341 x3
alicia@capemaystage.com

Cape May Stage Presents
Pulitzer Prize Winner
Topdog/Underdog
By Suzan-Lori Parks

Cape May Stage
Box Office: (609) 884-1341
The Robert Shackleton Playhouse
Bank & Lafayette Streets, Cape May, NJ 08204
www.capemaystage.com

Topdog/Underdog
by Suzan-Lori Parks
Directed by James Reynolds

Cape May, NJ – Cape May Stage, South Jersey’s premier professional Equity theatre, is thrilled to announce a production of a modern classic: Suzan-Lori Parks' *Topdog/Underdog*. Directed by Cape May Stage favorite James Reynolds – Co-Artistic Director of the Fremont (CA) Centre Theatre and star of *Days of Our Lives* – and starring Stephen Rider and Jed Reynolds, *Topdog/Underdog* opens September 30th at 8pm at the Robert Shackleton Playhouse on the corner of Bank and Lafayette Streets in downtown Cape May.

Suzan-Lori Parks’ Pulitzer Prize-winning drama is a modern fable concerning two African American brothers, set in the here and now. Named Lincoln and Booth by their drunkard of a father as “his idea of a joke”, their childhood was spent abandoned by their parents, eventually learning to depend on each other for sustenance and survival. Now in their thirties, the two are still searching for ways to bring themselves out of poverty, with varying degrees of legality and success. Link, a reformed gambler, is making a living by donning whiteface and top hat, impersonating his namesake (Lincoln) in an arcade and allowing customers to assassinate him several times an evening. Booth, however, is attempting to follow in his brother’s footsteps as a Three-card Monte hustler – insisting throughout the play that his brother call him by his newly-coined nickname “3-Card” – and attempting to augment his living as a petty thief. As the title suggests, the two are in constant competition with one another, with each brother victorious in his turn – in the areas where one brother is successful, the other loses – their roles continuously reversed throughout the play. Imbued with a strong sense of history – both personal and national – Parks crafts a fascinating drama rife with trials and triumphs, brotherly bonds and betrayals, and, ultimately, rivalry and resentment.

Topdog/Underdog received its premiere at the Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival on July 26, 2001. Directed by George C Wolfe, the production starred Jeffery Wright and Don Cheadle. The production moved uptown to the Ambassador Theatre for an April 4, 2002

opening. In the Broadway production, Cheadle was replaced by Mos Def. This production comes to Cape May after a critically acclaimed run at the Fremont Centre Theatre.

Topdog/Underdog is a raw, gritty work, presenting a truthful glimpse of life outside Victorian Cape May. As such, this production represents a bold choice for Cape May Stage, one aimed at exposing the theatergoing community to the validity of differing viewpoints celebrated by today's modern theatre. "Producing an African American woman's play is part of the mission of Cape May Stage," notes Artistic Director Roy Steinberg. "*Variety* says, 'the gritty lyricism of Parks' writing are unlike anything on a Broadway Stage'. *Topdog/Underdog* is poetry" he adds. Theatergoers are to be warned that the production contains extremely strong language and adult themes. A Pulitzer Prize winning play, *Topdog/Underdog* is part of Cape May Stage's commitment to providing the highest caliber of theatre to the community.

About the Cast

Stephen Rider (*Booth*) originally from Wilmington, DE & a graduate of William Penn HS, Stephen has a BA from Morehouse College & an MFA in acting from UCLA with a certificate in acting from the British American Drama Academy. Stephen can be seen in *The Great Debaters*, directed by Denzel Washington. Theatre credits include: The world premier of *Kindred* (Ivar Theatre), *Choice*, *Hambone*, *Activist Project*, *Three Sisters*, *True Love*, *Elements of Society*. Stephen attributes all of his success to his mother & grandmother.

Jed Reynolds (*Lincoln*) is a Los Angeles native. Professionally, he has been blessed to have performed at the Fremont Centre Theatre, including *Ravensridge* and *National Pastimes* where he helped originate the role of Jackie Robinson. He also was in the Native Voices original production of *Stoneheart*, which was fortunate enough to travel to San Francisco, New York and Washington DC. This past summer, Jed was in Chicago performing in another original piece, *Without a Parachute*. He has also worked in children's theater with Parson's Nose. Jed studied under Stephen Book, as well as in the BFA program at UC Santa Barbara. His film credits include *M.O.G.* and numerous appearances on *Days of Our Lives*. Outside of the acting profession, Jed has been most proud to give back to his high school Alma Mater. He coached the boys' basketball team at South Pasadena High School for five years and became instrumental in helping to raise thousands of dollars for the team through the annual Celebrity Basketball game. Hopefully success on the stage can lead to more success helping others.

Show Information

Topdog/Underdog opens Thursday, September 30, 2010, at 8:00 pm with a half-price preview performance scheduled for September 29 at 8:00 pm at the Robert Shackleton Playhouse at the corner of Bank & Lafayette Streets in downtown Cape May. Performances thereafter are Wednesday through Sunday through October 23 at 8:00 pm. Tickets are \$35 adults, \$30 seniors, and \$12.50 students. Call (609) 884-1341 for reservations and information or visit the theatre's website, www.capemaystage.com.

During the current run Cape May Stage is participating with eight Cape May gourmet restaurants in a money-saving "Dinner & A Show" package promotion - a special night out. Restaurants involved in the promotion include 410 Bank Street, The Blue Pig Tavern, Harry's Bar & Grille at

the Montreal Inn, The Ebbitt Room, Frescos, La Verandah at the Hotel Alcott, The Mad Batter, and The Washington Inn. Call the individual restaurants for reservations and information.

Topdog/Underdog is presented through the gracious support of the Dog Friendly Billmae Cottage, Carney's, and by Fairthorne Bed & Breakfast. This season's sponsors include 410 Bank Street/Frescos, Exit Zero, The Washington Inn, Cape May Winery, and Lucky Bones.

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Photo credit: Dove Huntley

Pictured: Stephen Rider and Jed Reynolds in "Topdog/Underdog"