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**BRANDON GILL (NY Public Theater's *Hamlet*) and
BRANDON MICHEAL HALL (HBO MAX'S *Search Party*) Star in
Pasadena Playhouse's Production of**

TOPDOG/UNDERDOG

by Suzan-Lori Parks

**Directed by Gregg T. Daniel (HBO's *True Blood*)
&**

**Announcing "Pay It Forward" Ticket Initiative
Benefitting Fire-Impacted Community Members**



BRANDON GILL



Booth BRANDON MICHEAL HALL

Lincoln

FEB 26 - MAR 23

TOPDOG
UNDERDOG



Wednesday, February 26, 2025 – Sunday, March 23, 2025

Press Opening March 4, 2025

Tickets on sale now at pasadenaplayhouse.org

PASADENA, CA (January 28, 2025) – Danny Feldman, Producing Artistic Director of Pasadena Playhouse, the State Theater of California and recipient of the 2023 Regional Theatre Tony Award, announces Brandon Gill (NY Public Theater's *Hamlet*, Shakespeare in the Park, Broadway's *A Christmas Carol*) to star as Booth and Brandon Micheal Hall (Broadway's *Trouble*

in Mind, TBS/HBO MAX'S *Search Party*) to star as Lincoln in Pasadena Playhouse's ***Topdog/Underdog*** (February 26 – March 23, 2025, Press Opening March 4) by Suzan-Lori Parks, directed by Gregg T. Daniel (HBO's *True Blood*, HBO's *Insecure*, NAACP Theater Award winner as Best Director for *Fences* at International City Theater). The Playhouse also launches a "Pay It Forward" ticket initiative, which enables audiences and community members to purchase tickets that will be distributed free of charge to people impacted by the tragic Los Angeles fires.

The full creative team is rounded out with Tesshi Nakagawa (Scenic Designer), Angelene (Angie) Storey (Assistant Scenic Designer), Angela Balogh Calin (Costume Designer), Jared Sayeg (Lighting Designer), Jeff Gardner (Sound Designer), Andrea Allmond (Associate Sound Designer); with Composition by DJ Tru, Guitar Composition and Musical Performance Coaching by Maritri, Movement Consultation by Joyce Guy, Intimacy and Fight Coordination by Sasha Nicolle Smith, and Casting by RBT Casting (Ryan Bernard Tymensky, CSA).

In ***Topdog/Underdog***, two brothers in freefall struggle to find their footing as they hustle their way through life. Haunted by the past and their obsession with street cons and cards, the brothers come to learn the true nature of their fate. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Suzan-Lori Parks' darkly comic fable is poetic, gripping, and unforgettable.

The New York Times calls ***Topdog/Underdog*** "The Greatest American Play of the Past 25 Years."

Tickets for ***Topdog/Underdog*** are currently available at pasadenaplayhouse.org, by phone at 626-356-7529, and at the Box Office at 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101.

About Pasadena Playhouse

Pasadena Playhouse, the official State Theater of California and recipient of the 2023 Regional Theatre Tony Award, is one of the most prolific theaters in the country. The Playhouse has staged thousands of original productions since its founding in 1917 including premieres of works by Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill, Suzan-Lori Parks and hundreds more. For decades, its pioneering School for Theater Arts was a training ground for actors and theatermakers who went on to make significant contributions to the entertainment industry. Under the leadership of Producing Artistic Director Danny Feldman since 2016, Pasadena Playhouse's productions and community programs are centered on its founding idea of being a living force in its community, making theater for everyone.

Calendar Listing for *Topdog/Underdog*

Topdog/Underdog

by Suzan-Lori Parks

Venue: Pasadena Playhouse, 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101

Dates: Wednesday, February 26 to Sunday, March 23
Press opening Tuesday, March 4 at 7:00 p.m.

Tickets: Online -- PasadenaPlayhouse.org
Pay It Forward Tickets – pasadenaplayhouse.org/pay-it-forward

By phone at 626-356-7529

In person -- Pasadena Playhouse Box Office, located at 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101

Performance Schedule: Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8:00 p.m.; Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.; Saturday at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.; Sundays at 2:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 23 at 2:00 p.m and 7:00 p.m

BIOGRAPHIES

For a full list of company bios to date, visit

<https://www.pasadenaplayhouse.org/event/topdog-underdog/>

Brandon Gill (Booth): Brandon is excited to make his Pasadena Playhouse debut. A proud New Yorker, he's a graduate of The Juilliard School. Recent: "Guildenstern" in the NY Public Theater's *Hamlet* (Shakespeare in the Park), directed by Kenny Leon. Theater: Originated the role of "Fred" in Broadway's Tony Award-winning production of *A Christmas Carol*, *Bella* (Playwrights Horizons, Lucille Lortel nomination – Best Featured Actor, dir Robert O'Hara), *The Last Goodbye* (Old Globe, dir Alex Timbers), World Premieres of Brandon Jacob Jenkins' *Neighbors* (Public Theater) & *Too Heavy For Your Pocket* (Roundabout). Brandon's narrated several *NY Times* Bestselling authors including *Black Panther: Dreams of Wakanda*. TV/Film: *Chicago P.D.*, *NCIS: New Orleans*, *Bashira*, *Radium Girls*, *Marvels: The Punisher*, *Madam Secretary*, *Blue Bloods*, *Law & Order: SVU*.

Brandon Micheal Hall (Lincoln): Brandon Micheal Hall made his Broadway debut in Roundabout's Tony-nominated production of *Trouble In Mind*, opposite LaChanze and directed by Charles Randolph-Wright. He is best known for his starring roles in the CBS hit drama *God Friended Me* and the ABC comedy *The Mayor*. Brandon most recently appeared in Netflix's feature *Girl Haunts Boy*, Peacock's *Poker Face*, and the independent feature *Audrey's Children*. Other film and TV credits include *Chloe*, *Search Party*, *The Surrogate*, *Injustice*, *Power*, *Always A Bridesmaid*, *Broad City*, *The Characters*, and *Unforgettable*.

Gregg T. Daniel (Director): Gregg T. Daniel directed West Coast revival/Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*/Mark Taper Forum. August Wilson's, *The Piano Lesson*, *King Hedley II*, *Radio Golf*, *Seven Guitars*, *Gem of the Ocean*/A Noise Within. James Ijames', *Kill Move Paradise*/Odyssey Theatre. Denver Center's world premiere, Beaufield Berry's *In The Upper Room*. Lanie Robertson's, *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill*, Katori Hall's, *The Mountaintop*/Garry Marshall Theatre. West Coast premieres/Mfoniso Udofia's, *Her Portmanteau*/Boston Court Theatre, Terrance Arvelle Chisolm's, *Br'er Cotton*/Lower Depth Theatre. Francisca da Silveira's, *Can I Touch It*, Lorraine Hansberry's, *Les Blancs*/Rogue Machine. Revival/Alice Childress', *Wedding Band* Antaeus Company. Gregg's the current Artistic Director of Lower Depth Theatre (www.Lower-Depth.com)

Suzan-Lori Parks (Playwright): Suzan-Lori Parks (Playwright) is the first African-American woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize in Drama. Other awards include *MacArthur Genius Grant*, Gish Prize. Theatre: *Topdog/Underdog* (Pulitzer), *Porgy and Bess* (Tony Award®), *365 Days/365 Plays*, *Father Comes Home from the Wars (Part 1, 2 & 3)*, *Fucking A*, *Plays for the First Hundred Days*, *The Book of Grace*, *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World aka the Negro Book Of The Dead*, *Venus*, *Unchain My Heart: The Ray Charles Musical*, *The America Play*, *Watch Me Work*, *In the Blood*. Upcoming: *Plays for the Plague Year*. Film: *The United States vs Billie Holiday*, *Girl 6*. TV: *Genius Aretha* (Creator/Writer/Showrunner). Novel: *Getting Mother's Body*. Parks writes songs and fronts her band Sula & The Noise. She is a former writing student of James Baldwin.

Tesshi Nakagawa (Scenic Designer): Tesshi Nakagawa is excited to return to Pasadena Playhouse where he previously designed *The Sound Inside* (2023) and *Uncle Vanya* (2022). Hailing from Tokyo, Japan, Tesshi Nakagawa has established a distinguished career as a Scenic Designer/Art Director in the Theater, Film, and Commercial industries. His theatrical designs have been showcased at numerous renowned venues throughout the Los Angeles area, including: A Noise Within, Boston Court Pasadena, South Coast Repertory, East West Players, Antaeus Theatre Company, and more. He is currently an adjunct professor at East Los Angeles College. Graduate of UCLA. For more information, visit www.tesshi.com

Angela Balogh Calin (Costume Designer): Angela is excited to collaborate with Gregg again. Costume and scenic design: Seattle Repertory, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, South Coast Repertory, Asolo Repertory, Milwaukee Repertory, Hollywood Bowl, Alliance Theatre, Cleveland Play House, Orlando Shakespeare, Pasadena Playhouse, A Noise Within Theatre, Chautauqua Theatre, The Old Globe Theatre, Laguna Playhouse, Antaeus Theatre, and the National Theatre in Bucharest – Romania. Awards: Los Angeles Critics Circle, Cleveland Drama Critics, Backstage, Garland, and the LADCC Lifetime Award for Outstanding Achievement In Theatrical Design. She is a resident artist at A Noise Within Theatre. M.F.A in Costume and Scenic Design from the National Academy of Arts in Bucharest – Romania. www.angelacalin.com

Jared A. Sayeg (Lighting Designer): Jared A. Sayeg is a nine-time Ovation Award Nominee and Winner of the Ovation, *StageRaw*, Garland and LADCC Kinetic Lighting Awards. Broadway: *The Illusionists*, *Bravo Bernstein*, *Gotham Glory* (Carnegie Hall). Regional: Center Theatre Group, Pasadena Playhouse, 5th Avenue Theatre, Sacramento Music Circus, Reprise, Ensemble Theatre Company, Laguna Playhouse, Indiana Rep, Virginia Stage Company. On the West-End he designed *Rolling with Laughter* at Her Majesty's Theatre. Jared was on the design teams for the Broadway productions of *PRIMO*, *The Woman in White*, *The Radio City Christmas Spectacular* and *Blithe Spirit* starring Angela Lansbury. Jared became the youngest member of the United Scenic Artists-Local 829 and serves as the Vice-Chair to the executive board. www.jaslighting.com

Jeff Gardner (Sound Designer): At Pasadena Playhouse: *One Of The Good Ones*, *Inherit The Wind*, *The Sound Inside*, *Miracle On 34th Street*, *It's A Wonderful Life*. Select credits include *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, and *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in The Universe* at the

Mark Taper Forum. Elsewhere: Williamstown Theatre Festival, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Cleveland Playhouse, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Baltimore Center Stage, Shakespeare Theatre Company (DC), Arena Stage, The Kennedy Center, Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Los Angeles; Geffen Playhouse, The Wallis, A Noise Within, Boston Court Pasadena, Antaeus Theatre Company, IAMA Theatre. Los Angeles Stage Alliance Ovation Award, Stage Raw and LA Drama Critics Circle Award Winner. Jeff can be seen at L.A. Theatre Works where he regularly performs live sound effects. jeffthomasgardner.net.

DJ Tru (Composition): Tru (Philip Patrick Harper) is a first-generation Belizean-American artist and composer from Leimert Park, CA. Drawing from his cultural heritage, Tru's work intersects sound art, performance, and multimedia installation. He has collaborated with institutions such as Center Theatre Group, USC Gloria Kaufman School of Dance, The Whitney Museum, Ballet BC and Netherlands Dance Theatre. Tru's practice as a composer centers on the fusion of experimental sound with storytelling, technology, and social history.

Maritri Garrett (Guitar Composition and Musical Performance Coaching): Maritri Garrett is a remarkable independent artist whose music reflects the depth of her diverse musical background. A composer, multi-instrumentalist, singer, and educator, her songs tell honest stories of life, love, and loss, offering healing and solace to all who listen. Maritri holds a unique blend of academic achievements, including a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Fisk University, a Bachelor of Science in Composition, and a Master of Fine Arts in Jazz Studies from Howard University. Her skillful versatility with instruments like the piano, guitar, bass, cello, and percussion sets her apart. Having performed with and opened for musical legends like Gladys Knight and Patti LaBelle, Maritri continues to captivate audiences with her emotionally powerful compositions and soulful performances.

Joyce Guy (Movement Consultant): Joyce is an actress, playwright, filmmaker and choreographer. Choreographed *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *Seven Guitars* and *Much Ado About Nothing* at A Noise Within (ANW); *Choir Boy* at DeZart Performs and *Can I Touch It* at Rogue Machine. Won 2023 LA Drama Critics Circle and LA Theatre Bite Awards for ANW's *Much Ado About Nothing*. For *Les Blancs* at Rogue Machine, won the NAACP Award for Best Choreography Local. Screen/TV: *Moneyball*, *The Santa Clause*, *Found*, *General Hospital*, *Clickbait*, to name a few. Studied West African dance for over 30 years. She's the director/producer of *Dancing Like Home*, a documentary about dance from Senegal, West Africa. She has a B.S. from Hampton University.

Sasha Nicolle Smith (Intimacy and Fight Coordination): Sasha is thrilled to be making her Pasadena Playhouse debut! Theater credits include: *The Lonely Few*, *Fat Ham*, *The Engagement Party*, *The Mountaintop* and *The First Deep Breath* (Geffen Playhouse), *The Notebook* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *Ms. Blakk For President* (Steppenwolf Theatre), *Familiar* (Steppenwolf Theatre), *How To Catch Creation* (Goodman Theatre), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Guthrie Theater), *The Bluest Eye* (VirginiaStage Company), *Toni Stone* (Milwaukee Rep), *Trading Places* (Alliance

Theater), *Smart People* (Writers Theater). Film/Television: *Beef* (Netflix), *Daisy Jones & The Six* (Amazon), *Swarm* (Amazon), *Tiny Beautiful Things* (Hulu), *Your Place or Mine* (Netflix), *That '90s Show* (Netflix), *How I Met Your Father* (Hulu), *Random Acts of Flyness* (HBO), among others.

Ryan Bernard Tymensky, CSA (RBT Casting): Ryan's versatility in the world of casting speaks for itself. For the last decade, Ryan has cast many theater productions in Los Angeles and New York, including many shows at Pasadena Playhouse and The Wallis. Their portfolio also includes notable TV and film projects such as the *Wicked* movies, *This Is Us*, *Atypical*, and many more. Ryan puts inclusion and diversity at the heart of everything they do. Their mission is to celebrate and actively advocate for performers who reflect the full spectrum of human diversity to help expand a multiplicity of narratives; narratives that reflect the real world we live in and challenge conventional boundaries that currently exist in the entertainment industry. rbtcasting.com. @rbtcasting

Alyssa Escalante (Stage Manager): Alyssa is a Los Angeles-based stage manager and proud graduate of Occidental College. She is excited to be back at the Pasadena Playhouse. Her Playhouse credits include *The Sound Inside*, *Stew*, and *Hold These Truths*. Most recently she finished *Waiting for Godot* at Geffen Playhouse. Alyssa has worked at many of the regional and small theatre companies in Southern California such as The Old Globe, South Coast Repertory, Boston Court Pasadena, Troubadour Theater Company, and Musical Theatre West. Additionally, Alyssa worked with SITI Company on their production of *The Bacchae* at the Guthrie Theater and was an in-town substitute on *Hamilton* with its Eliza Company at the Pantages Theatre.

Brian J. Semel (Assistant Stage Manager): Brian is a producer, writer, and occasional performer from NY. He spent five years as the lead producer and writer of a touring political comedy show for Crooked Media, but quit because our politics are unfathomably depressing. Since then, he's been producing performing arts festivals around Southern California for Community Arts Resources, as well as comedy shows in the back of taco shops and backyards for his friends. He joined the Playhouse as a PA on *La Cage aux Folles* and will stick around as long as they'll have him. He loves theater, his dog, organized labor, reading in parks, screaming into the void, and dancing the night away.