

For Immediate Release
October 6, 2020

THE COMMISSARY, RATTLESTICK PLAYWRIGHTS THEATER, AND NEW NEIGHBORHOOD PRESENT *WHY WOULD I DARE: THE TRIAL OF CRYSTAL MASON*

Directed by Tyler Thomas, Conceived by Tyler Thomas, Marin Ireland, Reggie White & Peter Mark Kendall

Cast Includes Crystal Dickinson, Peter Gerety, Peter Mark Kendall, Marin Ireland, and Shane McRae

The Commissary, [Rattlestick Playwrights Theater](#), and [New Neighborhood](#) are proud to present [Why Would I Dare?: The Trial of Crystal Mason](#), a virtual reading of the court transcript from the 2018 trial of Crystal Mason. Audiences will witness Mason's legal ordeal brought to life as she fights for her freedom, her family, and her right to vote. This free, online event is produced with the support of Crystal Mason, an advocate for voter rights. It will begin streaming on **October 13 at 7pm** and continue through **November 2, 2020**.

Striving to rebuild her life after prison, Crystal Mason attempted to vote in the 2016 election but was arrested and accused of casting a fraudulent vote. *Why Would I Dare?: The Trial of Crystal Mason* follows her harrowing fight against another five years in prison as neighbors testify against her newfound freedom and integrity as a Black American mother.

Directed by **Tyler Thomas** and conceived by Thomas, **Marin Ireland**, **Reggie White**, and **Peter Mark Kendall**, *Why Would I Dare?: The Trial of Crystal Mason* features **Crystal Dickinson** (Bruce Norris's *Clybourne Park*, Showtime's *The Chi*), **Peter Gerety** (Amazon Prime's *Sneaky Pete*), **Peter Mark Kendall** (FX's *The Americans*, CBS's *Strange Angel*), **Shane McRae** (Lucy Thurber's *The Hilltop Plays*, Amazon Prime's *Sneaky Pete*), and **Marin Ireland** (Martin Scorsese's *The Irishman*, Clifford Odets' *The Big Knife*, Martyna Majok's *Ironbound*).

The creative team includes production design by **You-Shin Chen**, sound design by **Megumi Katayama**, Associate Director **Rebecca Kenigsberg**, and Production Stage Manager **Clarissa Marie Ligon**. **Special thanks to Talene Monahan and Dan Aibel**.

Leading regional theaters across the country are partnering with The Commissary, Rattlestick, and New Neighborhood on this event, and include Celebration Theatre, Dorset Theatre Festival, Fonseca Theatre, Geffen Playhouse, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, Luna Stage, Marin Theatre Company, Mirrorbox Theatre, Delaware's Resident Ensemble Players, Round House Theatre, Studio Theatre (DC), and Warehouse Theatre. They will be sharing this event with their audiences which will lead to thoughtful discussions around the work.

Online reservations are encouraged. Please visit www.rattlestick.org for more information.

About the Artists

Tyler Thomas (Director) is a director and choreographer, currently based in NYC. Her work has most recently been shown at The Vineyard, New Ohio Theatre, Signature Theatre, The Flea, HERE Arts Center, and NYU. As an associate and assistant, she has worked with directors such as Lear deBessonet, Taibi Magar, Whitney White, Young Jean Lee, Lee Sunday Evans, Niegel Smith, and Jo Bonney, as well as with the Builders Association as associate dramaturg. Tyler is a former SDCF Observer, member of the Lincoln Center Directors' Lab, Visiting Artist at the Athens Conservatoire in Greece, Resident Director at The Flea, current 2050 NYTW Fellow, Foeller Fellow at Williamstown Theatre Festival, and Resident Director of The Commissary. She holds a BFA in Drama and MA in Arts Politics from the Tisch School of the Arts.

Crystal Dickinson (Crystal Mason). Broadway credits include *Clybourne Park*, for which she received an illustrious Theater World Award, and the Tony-nominated play, *You Can't Take It With You*, alongside James Earl Jones and Rose Byrne. She has also performed Off-Broadway at Lincoln Center, The Public Theater, Playwrights Horizons, The Signature Theater, and most recently Theater for a New Audience. She has worked with Thomas Kail, Michael Greif, Scott Ellis, Bryan Cranston, Wendell Pierce, Pam Mackinnon, Lila Neugebauer, Leigh Silverman, and Kenny Leon. Film and television credits include *Collateral Beauty*, *I Origins*, *This Is Where I Leave You*, *The Good Wife*,

New Amsterdam, a recurring role on Showtime's *The Chi*, and an upcoming appearance on ABC's *For Life*. A proud MFA graduate of The University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, she also studied at the London Academy for Music and Dramatic Art and is an elite member of the Lincoln Center Directors Lab and loves to volunteer with the 52nd Street Project in Hell's Kitchen.

Peter Gerety's (Judge) film credits include Michael Mann's *Public Enemies*, Robert Zemeckis' *Flight*, Clint Eastwood's *Changeling*, George Clooney's *Leatherheads*, Mike Nichols' *Charlie Wilson's War*, Spike Lee's *Inside Man*, the independent feature *Things That Hang from Trees*, *Syriana*, *War of the Worlds*, *K-Pax*, *People I Know*, *Magic Hour*, *Montana*, *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, *Mrs. Winterborne*, *Surviving Picasso*, Ed Burns' *Ash Wednesday*, *A Most Violent Year*, *Cymbeline*, *Get the Gringo*, *Paul Blart: Mall Cop*, *God's Pocket*, *The Sea Is All I Know*, *Hollywood Ending*, *The Curse of the Jade Scorpion*, *A Change in the Air* and *Working Man*. Television credits include Showtime's *Ray Donovan* HBO's *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* and *Muhammad Ali's Greatest Fight*; *Brothers And Sisters*, the Tom Fontana/WB series *The Bedford Diaries*, HBO's *The Wire*, *Homicide*, *Law and Order*, Ed Burns' *Public Morals*, *Kidnapped*, *Daredevil*, *Madam Secretary*, *The Black Donnelly's*, *Elementary*, *The Good Wife*, *Brotherhood*, *The House of Mirth*, *Central Park West*, *Third Watch*, *The Return to Lonesome Dove* and the PBS Mini-Series *Mercy Street*. Theatre credits include the Broadway productions of the late Nora Ephron's play *Lucky Guy* opposite Tom Hanks, Martin McDonough's *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, which transferred after a successful run off-Broadway at the Atlantic Theatre Company, *Never Gonna Dance*, and *Othello* opposite James Earl Jones; Suzan-Lori Parks's *Fucking A*, and *Henry V* at N.Y.'s Shakespeare in the Park. Peter worked on stage for over 30 years, performing in over 100 productions with the legendary Trinity Repertory of Providence, Rhode Island, alone (Adrian Hall, dir.). He has also performed with the Seattle Rep., the Dallas Theater Center, ART in Cambridge, the Huntington in Boston, and in Edinburgh, Madrid, Bombay, Calcutta, and Damascus.

Peter Mark Kendall (he/him) (The Prosecution; co-conceiver) Broadway: *Six Degrees of Separation* (Tony nomination for Best Revival), *The Rose Tattoo* (staged reading for The Acting Company, with Patti LuPone and Bobby Cannavale). Off-Broadway: *Blue Ridge* (The Atlantic), *The Harvest* (LCT3), *Mercury Fur* (The New Group), Joe's Pub, Judson, Chekhov at Lake Lucille. Regional theatre: Trinity Rep, Baltimore Centerstage, Bay Street, Chautauqua. Television: *Strange Angel*, *Outpost* (series regular); *Girls*, *The Americans*, *Chicago Med*, *The President is Missing*, *Eye Candy* (recurring); *Awkwafina...from Queens*; *The Good Fight*; *Gotham*; *Law and Order: SVU*; *The Leftovers*; *Blue Bloods*; *Public Morals*. Film: *Entangled*, *The Ticket*, *The Rest of Us*, *Louder than Bombs*, *Time Out of Mind*, *Seven Lovers*. Upcoming films: *The Scottish Play*, *Top Gun: Maverick*. Education: M.F.A., Brown/Trinity Rep. Founding member of the theatre company The Commissary, which is in residence at The Vineyard Theater in New York in 2021. He is in the duo-band *Hickory*.

Marin Ireland (she/hers) (Court Reporter; co-conceiver) Theatre credits include: *Reasons to be Pretty*, for which she won a Theatre World Award and was nominated for a Tony. Her other New York credits include *The Big Knife* and *After Miss Julie* (Broadway), *Ironbound* at Rattlestick, *Kill Floor* at Lincoln Center, *Blasted* and *Marie Antoinette*, both at Soho Rep, *Three Sisters* at Classic Stage, *Cyclone* at Studio Dante (Obie Award), and *In The Wake* at the Public Theatre. Some of her TV and film work includes the second season of the "Umbrella Academy", "Girls", "Homeland", "Masters of Sex", *The Divide*, "The Slap", "Sneaky Pete", *Glass Chin* (Independent Spirit nomination 2016), *Sparrows Dance*, *The Family Fang*, *28 Hotel Rooms*, *The Irishman*, *Hell or High Water*, and the Lifetime movie *Flint*, about the Flint water crisis, playing activist Melissa Mays. She co-founded the website hrforthearts.org with civil rights and liberties lawyer Norman Siegel, which aims to be a resource to help address harassment and bullying within the arts community.

Shane McRae (he/him) (The Defense; co-conceiver) starred in Lucy Thurber's *Killers & Other Family* at Rattlestick and then again in *The Hilltown Plays*. He plays Taylor Bowman on Amazon's *Sneaky Pete* and has appeared in such films as *The Help*, *Still Alice*, and *The Adjustment Bureau*, among others. Shane received his MFA from NYU's Graduate Acting Program and appeared in *Take Me Out* on Broadway. He currently can be seen in the Spectrum Original series, *Paradise Lost*.

Reggie D. White (he/him) (co-conceiver) Broadway: *The Inheritance* (Drama Desk Award for Best Play), International: *Flood In The Valley* (China). Off-Broadway: *Hundred Days*, *I & You*, *For The Last Time*. Regional: *The Luckiest* (La Jolla Playhouse), *The Bluest Eye* (Arden Theatre), *And She Would Stand Like This* (The Movement Theatre Company), *Frontieres Sans Frontieres* (Bushwick Starr), *The Last Tiger in Haiti* (Berkeley Rep/La Jolla Playhouse), *Party People* (Berkeley Rep). Film & TV: "Gotham", "Blindspot", "The Parent 'Hood", *Buzzer*, *Medias Res*, *Stranger In Blood*. Training: Atlantic Theater School, Cal State Hayward. Reggie is a Company Member of The Williams Project - a living wage theatre company. Reggie is also a recipient of the TBA Titan Award and the TCG Fox Fellowship. www.reggiedwhite.net

About The Commissary

The Commissary is a grassroots theater collective formed during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are a group of theater artists committed to excavating and reimagining our art form during this isolated time. We are compelled, through necessity but also through a deep and abiding interest, to seek a theater which is divergent—to rethink our form, to push the boundaries of it to make new shapes. We engage found texts, verbatim transcripts, and aural recording to meld the literatim with the theatrical. We are committed to the representation of the multiplicity of voices that comprise our society, most especially to the marginalized and the disenfranchised. To that end, we align ourselves with the complex, rich history of activism and the fight for social justice in America. In our work, we amplify the voices from that history and join them as we continue to fight a more equitable and compassionate society.

About Rattlestick Playwrights Theater

Founded in 1994, **Rattlestick Playwrights Theater** consistently produces new voices and works that are provocative and immediate in both form and substance. Rattlestick has a deep commitment to producing fierce works that challenge and stimulate audiences to confront the complexities of our culture. Notable productions include: Diana Oh's *{mylingerieplay}*, Dael Orlandersmith's *Until the Flood*, Samuel D. Hunter's *The Few* and *Lewiston/Clarkston*, Jesse Eisenberg's *The Revisionist*, Jonathan Tolins' *Buyer and Cellar*, Lucy Thurber's *The Hilltown Plays*, Adam Rapp's *The Hallway Trilogy*, and Martyna Majok's *Ironbound*.

Rattlestick produces mainstage productions; develops work by Middle Voice (Rattlestick's apprentice company); creates artistic development opportunities for artists to hone their craft; and provides opportunities for students to engage with innovative work through residencies, fellowships, and special performances. Visit rattlestick.org for more information.

About New Neighborhood

Founded in 2015, **New Neighborhood** has produced new TV, theater, music, film, and dance work by Will Arbery, Monica Bill Barnes & Company, Sheila Callaghan, Nathan Alan Davis, Marcus Gardley, Frank Harts, Suzanne Heathcote, Honus Honus, Rolin Jones, Lucas Papaelias aka LPfunK, The Petersons, and Aaron Posner, among others, with partners in Los Angeles, New York, Washington, D.C., and various New England resort towns. In June 2019, in a reclaimed sushi factory in Queens, New Neighborhood produced *Filibustered and Unfiltered*, the first 24-hour reading of the entire [redacted] Mueller Report, which inspired more than a dozen other events across the country. Featured everywhere from the *Los Angeles Times* ("a live-theater summer sensation!") to *Breitbart News* ("the single most boring and pointless way to waste your time!"), the tidal wave of readings reached its apex when it was name-checked during Robert Mueller's nationally televised Congressional testimony. In the 1960s, these kinds of events might have been called "happenings." Today, New Neighborhood calls them Live Actions, socially interactive theatrical installations that change and grow as audience members contribute their own unique voices and perspectives to the conversation. newneighborhood.net

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