Award-Winning Actors, Writers, and Producers Discuss the Future of Theater with BPL

Berkshire Playwrights Lab’s Off the Cuff series brings Tony Shaloub, others, to living rooms near and far

[Great Barrington, MA] – The second and third installments in Berkshire Playwrights Lab’s Off the Cuff series will take place Wednesdays, August 19 and August 26 at 6:00 pm. The August 19 event is a replacement for the discussion originally scheduled for August 5 which was impacted by Tropical Storm Isaias. Both programs will be broadcast live, online, free of charge at BerkshirePlaywrightsLab.org and Facebook.com/BerkshirePlaywrightsLab. Off the Cuff is presented in partnership with the Berkshire Museum.

Each program in the Off the Cuff series takes a deep dive into societal and cultural issues that affect theater-goers and theater-makers alike at this consequential moment for both the theater and the country. These expansive, free-wheeling conversations will be streamed live before being made available after the event for ongoing viewing. Participants in the live event will be invited to submit questions to the panelists during the program.

The following panelists will join the conversation on August 19:

- **Tom Fontana**, Emmy and WGA-winning writer (*Homicide Life on the Streets, Oz*)
- **Awoye Timpo**, celebrated Off-Broadway director (*The Homecoming Queen, The Revolving Cycles Truly and Steadily Roll’d*)
• **Lillias White**, Tony-winning actress and singer and HAPI documentary narrator
  (Disney's *Hercules*, *The Life*, Netflix’s *The Get Down*)

**Three new panelists will share their thoughts on August 26:**

• **Tony Shaloub**, Tony Award, Golden Globe, and Emmy-winning actor (*Monk, Marvelous Mrs. Maisel, The Band’s Visit*)

• **Dan Lauria**, renowned Broadway and TV actor (*Lombardi, The Wonder Years*)

• **Melia Bensussen**, Obie-winning theater director, Artistic Director at Hartford Stage, and former Chair of the Performing Arts Department at Emerson College

Both *Off the Cuff* events will be co-hosted by BPL co-artistic directors Joe Cacaci and Felicia Harden with participation from BPL co-artistic directors Richard Dresser and James Anthony Tyler. Among the many topics covered, viewers can expect the discussions to include questions such as:

• Given its far-reaching effects on every facet of our lives, how will Covid-19 impact the theater world?

• Has the theater community been complicit with or resistant to white supremacy?

• What should be the mission of the American Theater going forward? Who are we, what do we stand for and where do we go from here?

Both the August 19 and August 26 events are free and registration is not required. Simply visit [facebook.com/BerkshirePlaywrightsLab](https://facebook.com/BerkshirePlaywrightsLab) or [https://tinyurl.com/BPL-Youtube](https://tinyurl.com/BPL-Youtube).

**About Berkshire Playwrights Lab**

Berkshire Playwrights Lab occupies a unique position in the theater landscape, both locally in the Berkshires and nationally. For 15 years, BPL has been one of a few organizations in the country to focus solely on the development of new plays, and, consequently, on the development of new playwrights. A sharp focus on new talent and new ideas has given BPL
expertise in finding adventurous thinkers and lively pockets of creativity in the theater community nationwide.

Over 15 years of cutting-edge work, BPL has:

- offered scores of playwrights the unusual four-day opportunity to hone their new plays in collaboration with professional actors and a director, culminating in an elaborately staged reading before a large live audience of up to 400 people.

- actively engaged audience members in the process of “creating theater.”

- taken some of those new plays to full production, like James Anthony Tyler’s *Some Old Black Man*, which had its premiere reading at The Mahaiwe, its premiere production at St. James Place and its NYC premiere production at 59E59th St. theaters. In addition, BPL has served as a pipeline for new material for theater companies across the country—among them Berkshire Theatre Festival, New Jersey Repertory, Shakespeare & Company and The Public Theater—where plays that BPL launched were given full productions.

- nurtured local writing talent through The Radius Festival and Berkshire Voices Writers Workshop.

- forged deep collaborative relationships with actors, playwrights, directors, producers and artistic directors across the country. Their participation in these conversations acknowledges the value they place on their partnerships with BPL.

**About the Berkshire Museum**

Located at 39 South Street in downtown Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the Berkshire Museum combines art, science, and history to create thought-provoking experiences for the whole family through interactive programs, interdisciplinary exhibitions, and engaging online series. The museum building is now open by reservation Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays, featuring *The Art of Warner Bros. Cartoons* and Aquarium. Plan your visit at
berkshiremuseum.org or go to explore.berkshiremuseum.org to enjoy the Berkshire Museum wherever you are.