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HALL'S DREAM DEBUT

MLK play 'Mountaintop' bows this fall

By DAVID ROONEY

Producers Jean Doumanian and Sonia Friedman are eyeing a fall Broadway opening for Katori Hall's play "The Mountaintop."

Kenny Leon is in negotiations to direct the two-hander about a fictitious encounter between the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and a woman claiming to be a Memphis motel maid on the night before the civil rights leader's assassination.

Hall's play premiered to strong reviews at London fringe venue Theater 503 before transferring to a limited West End run at Trafalgar Studios last summer. Directed by James Dacre, that staging this week earned



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2010 Olivier Award nominations for best new play and lead actress Lorraine Burroughs. The production also received Evening Standard Award noms for most promising playwright and lead actor David Harewood.

No cast has been announced for the Rialto incarnation.

Leon will be repped on Broadway this season by the upcoming revival of August Wilson's "Fences," starring Denzel Washington and Viola Davis.

Sonia Friedman Prods. is lead producer on the Broadway revival of "La Cage aux Folles," opening April 18, while Jean Doumanian Prods. is attached to Lincoln Center Theater's Off Broadway staging of Andrew Bovell's "When the Rain Stops Falling." That play has been a strong seller even before previews start, prompting pundits to view it as a possible commercial transfer candidate.

A recent Juilliard School playwriting program grad, American scribe Hall will make her Broadway debut with the play. She was the 2009-10 recipient of the Playwrights of New York Fellowship, an annual prize administered by the Lark Play Development Center, worth an estimated \$80,000. Her 2007 play, "Hoodoo Love," had an Off Broadway run at the Cherry Lane Theater.