

Driftwood Audio Introduction

Welcome to this introduction to the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2026 production of *Driftwood* by Martina Laird. It has been directed for the Royal Shakespeare Company, in association with Kiln Theatre by Justin Audibert.

The performance lasts for 2 hours, and 40 minutes including one 20-minute interval and will be audio described by myself, Diandra McCalla.

The following introduction will take about 12 minutes to listen to and includes descriptions of the set, characters and costumes.

Please note that this production explores themes of incest and has depictions of violence and death. *Driftwood* also features loud music, flashing lights, stage blood and gun shots. Additionally, there is strong and discriminatory language used throughout.

The description on the Royal Shakespeare Company's website sets the scene, "Heat is rising in colonial Trinidad. While support for political independence is growing, a downtown Port of Spain gentlemen's club is about to be entangled in a custody battle of its own. Alma [the name of the club] promises guests a

welcome escape from the bustle of the capital. The club is owned by Englishman Mansion, governed by Pearl and coveted by her beguiling daughter Ruby – each with their own business plan in mind. An unexpected stranger - Diamond - carries in a rum delivery, bringing with him a familial revelation and a pursuit for wealth. His deal with a corrupt US Marine imperils Alma, and all who call it home. One wrong move and everything could shatter, but who will play the right game?”

As we take our seats, we're presented with the shadowy and warm interior of Alma, a gentlemen's drinking club in Trinidad's capital city, Port of Spain in 1956, where all the action takes place. The set, inspired by colonial architecture of the previous century, features lots of wood and is built to encourage airflow in the sweltering climate.

At the start of the play, the square space is 5 metres wide, and 5 metres deep marked by walls at the sides and rear of the stage. Later in the story, the walls are pushed outwards by the production team, to around 9 metres wide, to give the effect of zooming the audience into the world of the characters who dwell in and visit Alma. The performance however, stays in the same square footprint of the room marked out by brown floorboards. The characters still come and go via the main entrance on the left, and the archway on the right, the space

extending beyond the walls, suggesting access to other rooms in the house.

At the top of the rear and side walls are panels with horizontal shutters. The shutter slats on the rear wall open and close at times to let shards of light through into the room below. The walls and upper shutters are painted in royal blue, but the window frames, sashes, side shutters, archways and doors are painted contrastingly in white.

The wall to the left has a central set of French doors with a brass knob opening outwards as the main entrance to Alma. Framing the doors on the left and right are two-metre-high French-style windows with the sill around one metre from the floor. Above this are ornately carved wood panels in the wall with a swirled design which let light and air through from outside.

The right wall has two large archways each about two metres wide and three metres tall with the same carved wood cut outs above them. The characters use the archway furthest away from the audience to go to other unseen rooms of the Alma house, including the storage area. Separating the archways is a section of the blue wall, against which stands the radio resembling a brown wooden cabinet one metre tall. There is a

window on its front face indicating the frequencies, with five round black tuning dials above the black speaker face at the base. A working round pale blue desk fan sits on top of the radio, which the characters frequently go to for some respite from the stifling Trinidadian heat. In Act Two, Ruby is gifted a record player in a blue and white case by Tom, a US navy officer, which is placed on top of the radio next to the fan. Placed next to the radio is a light brown wooden dining chair with arms, a bottle green leather seat and a beige ruffled cushion.

The rear wall of the space has a French window in the centre, positioned in the middle of two white shutter panels either side and row of shutters around 30cm in height above the window frame. To the left of the window in the corner of the room is a narrow wooden cupboard of similar dimensions to a grandfather clock, around two metres tall, next to a wooden dining chair and a square table. On a plinth located centrally in front of the window sits an African looking brown wooden sculpture of a woman with prominent breasts, hips and bottom standing about 50cm tall. To the right of the sculpture is a white shelf displaying various bottles of alcohol and below it is a wooden rectangular table, creating a makeshift bar with short drinking glasses and a glass fruit bowl filled with limes. A straw broom is propped up against the bar table.

In the centre of the room is a large circular wooden dining table with ornately carved legs surrounded by five wooden chairs. At the front of the stage to the left is a Chesterfield style dark red leather armchair with cream crocheted doilies on each arm and an orange cushion placed on the seat. Next to the chair is a small wooden side table and a footstool with a pink velvet cushioned top. On the right side at the front of the stage is a dark wooden table about 60cm tall with three small round stools placed around it and a glass ashtray on top. At the start of the play this table is tucked under the bar, and the stools are stacked next to the cupboard at the back of the room. Hanging centrally above the room is a pendant light with a white lampshade. The faulty lightbulb flickers frequently.

Ruby is a biracial Black Caribbean and white British woman in her late twenties or early thirties, with brown skin and a slim figure. She wears red lipstick, gold dangling hoop earrings, a gold chain with an oval locket and her curly black hair is styled in a shoulder-length bob. When we first meet Ruby, she is dressed in a red off-the-shoulder top, a white calf-length skirt patterned with red roses, cherries and lemons, flat white pumps and a white belt around her waist. In Act Two, she swirls in a long red fitted trumpet dress with tulle underskirt which floats up as she dances in black peep toe heels. Ruby's zest for life

and flirtatiousness radiates to all around her as she sways her hips while she sings along to her beloved music, drawing the attention of the men.

Diamond stands tall at six feet three inches with a muscular build. He is a dark-skinned Black man in his thirties with very short, shaved hair and a thin moustache. He sports a white short-sleeved shirt with open collar above tan high-waisted trousers and dark brown boots. When he arrives, he carries a heavy wooden crate of bottles and has a brown suit jacket draped over one arm. When relaxed, Diamond strides upright and shifts his weight casually with his hands in his pockets and the flash of a gentle smile.

Local police officer **Seldom** is a friend and business partner of Ruby's. He is a brown-skinned Indian-Caribbean man, aged 24 years, who is five feet eight inches tall and has a slim build. He is a sprightly boisterous character, who slicks his cropped black wavy hair to the side when he arrives, after removing his black police hat. Seldom wears his police uniform which is a beige open collar short-sleeved police shirt, with metallic numbers 857 on each shoulder epaulette and above his shirt pocket. Seldom also wears greyish-blue knee-length shorts, a white belt with a large baton attached at his waistband, long blue socks that come up to just below the knees and black shoes.

He often smirks and makes exaggerated gestures when joking with Ruby and he eyes her curves from across the room.

Pearl is Ruby's mother who runs Alma and has lived there for many years. Pearl is a dark-skinned Black woman around 65 years old. She moves heavily yet decisively and walks with a noticeable limp from years of wearing ill-fitting shoes. Pearl is five feet three inches tall and has her black hair styled in 1950s rolls at the front swept back with the loose curls flowing at the back just past her shoulders. When we meet Pearl, she has a long black sheer V-neck dress which is decorated with a black velvet floral pattern and has sleeves to the elbow. Underneath the sheer layer is a knee-length lime green dress. Pearl has red painted nails matching her lipstick and she also wears black woven leather shoes, a gold watch and a green jewelled broach on her chest. Later she wears a white, purple and pink floral print top with a pink and green patterned skirt. Pearl has a world-weary expression, often rolling her eyes and rubbing her sore feet.

The owner of the Alma club is **Mansion**, a white British man in his late sixties with a rotund frame and thinning short grey hair, which he wears slicked back under his cream Panama-style hat with a black sash. At five feet ten inches tall, Mansion dresses primly in a cream linen suit jacket with a pinstriped silk lining, a

matching waistcoat, an open collar white shirt and suit trousers. A gold chain bows from his waistcoat pocket to the button which matches his gold cufflinks. Mansion walks upright, but he lounges back when sitting in a chair and often has a glass of rum in his hand.

Tom is a white American naval officer around six feet two. He dresses smartly in an all-white sailor's uniform including a long sleeve jumper with V-shaped collar and rank patches on the sleeves, a navy-blue neckerchief around his shoulders, flared trousers and black leather lace-up shoes. Tom also wears a round white sailor's hat which he removes when he enters Alma. Tom swaggers confidently and coolly squares up to the other men to assert himself.

The four members of the production team who manage the set changes are dressed in casual clothes of the period including, brimmed hats, grey shirts with rolled up sleeves and high-waisted trousers with braces.

Cast (in order of appearance)

Ruby is played by Cat White

Diamond is played by Martins Imhangbe

Seldom is played by Shane David-Joseph

Pearl is played by Ellen Thomas

Mansion is played by Roger Ringrose

Tom is played by Ziggy Heath

Production Credits

The Director is Justin Audibert

The Set and Costume Designer is Sadeysa Greenaway-Bailey

The Lighting Designer is Simon Spencer

The Movement Director is Kloé Dean

The Sound Designer is Tony Gayle

The Composer is Christella Litras