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MOSAIC THEATER COMPANY'S FALL 2020 UPDATE

Institutional evolution, led by a recommitment to anti-racism, informs a fall roster of programming, featuring new play development and virtual engagement initiatives

WASHINGTON (Monday, October 5, 2020) —

With a reawakening to our own founding mission, coupled with great esteem and respect for the [We See You, White American Theatre](#) movement, the Mosaic staff and Board are evaluating and amending policies across the organization through the lens of anti-racism and intersectional equity,” said [Bill Tompkins](#), Chair of Mosaic’s Board of Directors. Mosaic’s acknowledgement of the [BIPOC Demands for White American Theatre](#) can be found on mosaictheater.org.

“These activities are not siloed from the artistic storytelling Mosaic offers; instead, they are essential to, and strengthen, every aspect of our art, and they help hold us accountable to our mission of interculturalism. The work we’re focusing on now aims to react responsibly to the moment we’re in and serve our communities with ways to seed connection, while also strengthening brand new works of theater, so that we have something truly special to share with our audiences when we’re able. Though this is something of a cocooning and regrowth phase, we have brilliant staff and a team of partnering artists determined to seed hope through their artistry via adaptive methods suited to this moment.”

“Six months ago Mosaic cut its budget in half and eliminated hundreds of thousands of dollars in projected revenue from ticket sales. Similar challenges have forced many of our sister theaters to lay off employees. Keeping Mosaic’s 15 staff members employed is a commitment from our exemplary Board of Directors. To do that, Mosaic has had to tightly focus its activities. As we work our way through this public health emergency - exacerbated by a limited Federal response - we hope you will engage with us safely in online classes, new play development events, and virtual public programming. While none of us can say when it might happen, we can’t wait to share the live theater experience with you again.”

New Play Development and Recorded Performances

Mosaic’s 6th Season will support development of new works by DMV playwrights **Ifa Bayeza**, **Psalmayene 24**, and **Roz White**. This commitment to new plays is built on Mosaic’s past work on world premieres by Tarrance Arvelle Chisholm, Ally Currin, Caleen Sinette Jennings, Mona Mansour, Alexandra Petri, and others.

First up: DEAR MAPEL, written and performed by [Psalmayene 24](#). Multidisciplinary artist [Natsu Onoda Power](#) (Mosaic's *Charm*; Georgetown University) directs the hybrid workshop presentation from DC's restaurant co-sponsor [Baby Wale](#) with percussion from DC artist [Jabari Exum](#) (Marvel's *Black Panther*), dramaturgy by Arena Stage's [Jocelyn Clarke](#) and videography by [Emic Films](#). The autobiographical, solo play centers Psalm's relationship with his deceased father through a series of letters, both real and imagined, and asks if it is possible to alter relationships we have with those who have died. Psalmayene 24 (Mosaic's Andrew W. Mellon Playwright in Residence) has said, "*This is the play I've been afraid to write and perform for years...but the time is now. What a gift to be working with this particular, dream team of artists as we navigate new forms and experiences for theatrical connection.*" The play is generously underwritten by Mosaic Board Member **Leonade Jones**. DEAR MAPEL will be available to stream on Monday, October 26th at 7:30pm (followed by a special reception with the artists!), with no cost tickets available now on our website. The performance video will be available for ticketholders to stream at their convenience, through Sunday, November 1.

Also in the works is a world premiere play commission reuniting *Marie & Rosetta*'s [Roz White](#) and [Sandra Holloway](#), alongside playwright Alma Davenport (of Seattle's Brown Soul Productions). Of the piece, currently titled RESIST, Davenport says: "*Woven into this piece is the music and stories of Nina Simone, Lena Horne, Alberta Hunter, and Roberta Flack. Their music serves as a backdrop as we go on a musical and dramatic journey of "The Everywoman" as experienced by Roz, as she moves through career, motherhood, divorce, social change, and a pandemic.*" Mosaic hopes to present this one-woman medley of tribute and original music to outdoor, socially distant audiences in Spring 2021, if circumstances allow, while also making performances accessible virtually to those who cannot join in person.

Previously announced Season Six projects may arrive on personal screens near you in the coming months, thanks to Mosaic staff who have facilitated in-house video production capabilities. INHERIT THE WINDBAG, the world premiere by [Alexandra Petri](#) shuttered by the pandemic on its first preview, has been recorded from the actors' homes via Zoom. After three weeks of directing and capturing performances remotely, director [Lee Mikeska Gardner](#) and her editing team are at work on a rough cut of the 90-minute project starring [Tameika Chavis](#) (Demon), [Stephen Kime](#) (Demon), [John Lescault](#) (William F. Buckley), and [Paul Morella](#) (Gore Vidal). Video capture and eventual streaming of INHERIT THE WINDBAG is made possible by Actors Equity Association through a novel in-home recording contract. INHERIT THE WINDBAG is underwritten by the Trish Vradenburg Play Commission.

THE TILL TRILOGY was also cut short mid-rehearsal in March 2020. Mosaic is committed to preserving the 3-part presentation for live performance, when it can have its greatest impact. Meanwhile, with Mosaic support, playwright [Ifa Bayeza](#) continues to revise the second piece, and world premiere, of the trilogy: THAT SUMMER IN SUMNER, focusing on the Black activists and journalists who, in 1955, risked everything to bring international attention to the trial of the murderers of 14-year-old Emmett Till. Mosaic is grateful to all the artists and practitioners on the

show and the continued support of The Roy Cockrum Foundation, which recognized this production with a “dream production” grant in 2019.

Education Initiatives Provide Artistic Enrichment Opportunities

Led by Angelisa Gillyard, Mosaic’s Education and Outreach Department is spearheading a multilayered affirmation of Mosaic’s long-standing educational programs, while also launching several new initiatives tailored to a virtual world.

Apprenticeships and Internships continue during the public health emergency. Mosaic Staff recently welcomed three, paid Apprentices who began their posts remotely. Virtual Fall Internship applications are now under review. Mosaic’s recruitment efforts prioritize BIPOC applicants, offer stipends, online participation, a professional development curriculum, and course credit.

Continuing its multi-year “Mosaic on the Move” collaboration with the **DC Public Library**, Mosaic’s Education and Outreach Department curated 3, free online **Playwriting Workshops** in September. Following the success of the sold out series taught by **James J. Johnson** and **Gethsemane Herron-Coward**, an additional class has been scheduled for October 24th. Go to mosaictheater.org/education to register.

Mosaic will soon launch a request for submissions to its first **Playwriting Contest**, open to all students in grades 9-12 enrolled in a Public or Charter School in the District or in Prince George’s County. Students will have the opportunity to attend a virtual workshop on playwriting before submitting their entries, which may span from 1-10 minute monologues to multi-character plays of up to 20 minutes. Entrants may compete in one or more categories for a chance to win a cash prize and have their play read and directed by trained artists in a culminating, online festival.

Virtual Public Programming Continues to Connect Artists and Experts to our Community through Creative Conversations, Peace Cafés and other events

Laley Lippard, Manager of Public Programming and Partnerships, continues to curate interactive, online events to deepen conversation with audiences surrounding topics raised in Mosaic productions, and those that resonate with the company’s mission.

Upcoming events will center the themes emerging from Psalmayene 24’s DEAR MAPEL, and include:

- Monday, October 5th at 4:00pm | *Making Peace with the Departed* is a **Peace Café** featuring original poetry. Dr. Jeff Menzise, renowned educator and doctor of clinical psychology, will facilitate along with members of [Seeds of Peace](#), an organization committed to transforming legacies of conflict into courage.

- Thursday, October 15th at 7:30pm | **Creative Conversation** *Remembering Ruth Bader Ginsburg with Edward Gero* featuring local change-makers and artists like Craig Wallace and Molly Smith in conversation with a titan of the DC stage. Amplifying Gero's [DC Metro Theater Arts](#) article, join us on a journey through Justice Ginsburg's life and impact on the theater community.
- Thursday, October 22nd at 7:30pm | **Creative Conversation** *Mixology: What Makes Us Who We Are* will include recipes, cocktails, and stories of home with playwright and performer Psalmayene 24, director Natsu Onoda Power, and a special guest.

To learn more about Virtual Public Programming's origins, plus past and future events, visit: mosaictheater.org/alive.

"Acknowledging the precariousness of our industry and our own institution, Mosaic is in the adaptation phase of the COVID-19 shutdown; acknowledging that our theatre performance landscape may look very different for longer than we had hoped. We continue to explore hybrid options for all future projects, allowing for boldness and innovation in ways our audiences can consume the art, and always protecting the safety of our communities. Mosaic expresses sincere gratitude to Board Chair Bill Tompkins, and the entire Mosaic Board, for their commitment to full staff retention through the fiscal year. Because of their dedication, paired with the enormous talent of our Development Staff ([Alexandra Cantalupo](#), Aria Velz, and Dina Soltan), we're able to bring work to you that is intercultural, provocative, and this year, centering hope - and we're going to do it all at no cost to the patrons whose support we could not appreciate more." - Managing Director [Serge Seiden](#)

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