

Mosaic Theater Company of DC Press Release

Ari Roth, Founding Artistic Director • Serge Seiden, Managing Director & Producer
• Victoria Murray-Baatin, Associate Artistic Director



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jez Kline, Director of Marketing
jez@mosaictheater.org

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MOSAIC THEATER COMPANY OF DC ANNOUNCES 5th ANNIVERSARY #WOKESEASON5

Season Highlights Include World Premiere Staging of Ifa Bayeza's Three Play Repertory on The Life and Death of Emmett Till (The Till Trilogy) made possible by a generous grant from The Roy Cockrum Foundation, along with World Premiere by Washington Post humorist Alexandra Petri on William F. Buckley and Gore Vidal 1968 Debates (Inherit The Windbag); plus DC premieres of Lynn Nottage's Fabulation: or the Education of Undine, Jonathan Spector's Eureka Day, Yusef el Gindi's Pilgrims Musa and Sheri in the New World, and American Premiere of Canadian Norman Yeung's Theory.

(Washington, DC) **From Founding Artistic Director, Ari Roth:** "The eight amazing plays in Mosaic's 5th Anniversary Season offer up Stages of Awakening—urgent, exhilarating and humble—that hurtle our characters, and by extension, us, forward to new levels of awareness, puncturing bubbles of pretension along the way. To be "woke" is to be no longer in the dark about what's happening around us; about the systems of oppression and persistence of racism that permeate daily life. But it can be tricky terrain, these states of "wokeness," leading to pats-on-the-back of self-congratulations and new forms of denial. Our extraordinary playwrights are hip to our follies and foibles, just as they're poised to wake us up to the realities of our moment and the relevance of history still knocking on our door.

In these perilous, passionate, and still promising times in America, we invite you to join Mosaic on a journey in this, our fifth year, as we build on all we've achieved in creating a Fusion Community, with audiences deeply engaged in the lives of characters as they reflect the world around us and our city's gritty reality; where protagonists are poised for breakthroughs and breakdowns in equal measure. From our lead heroine Undine, in **Lynn Nottage's** masterpiece comedy, *Fabulation*, where confidence collides with comeuppance, to **Norman Yeung's** free speech protagonist busy dismantling the cinematic patriarchy in *Theory*, to the overly enlightened anti-vax parent-body in **Jonathan Spector's** hilarious *Eureka Day*, the season kicks off with laughs that land where it hurts. There's romance and revelation

to be found in the sexual anxieties of Musa and Sheri, *Pilgrims* indeed, setting sail on a journey to become their most authentic selves in prolific **Yussef El Guindi's** DC debut. And our blazingly witty local playwright, **Alexandra Petri**, leaves no bloviator unpunctured in *Inherit The Windbag*, her searing reflection on the '68 election debates between William F. Buckley and Gore Vidal. All of which leads us to the mountain top, as our season culminates with the world premiere staging of **Ifa Bayeza's** *The Till Trilogy*, three plays about the life and death of Emmett Till, the trial of his murderers, and a moment when America woke up, for just a moment, to its own revulsion of racism."

From Managing Director Serge Seiden: "#WOKESEASON5 is a milestone for Mosaic Theater Company and Washington, DC. In four short years Mosaic has produced 32 plays and musicals, 30 staged readings, 5 new play development workshops, 8 World Premieres, and a national tour. Three world premiere productions have received nominations for the Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding New Play or Musical from the Helen Hayes Awards.

Since inception, Mosaic has tripled its budget and staff and more than doubled its audience size, quickly becoming the anchor tenant of the Atlas Performing Arts Center on H Street NE. Major support from mission-conscious national and regional foundations as well as a cadre of passionate individuals and Board members have helped power Mosaic's impressive growth.

Impact has grown exponentially. More diverse than ever, Mosaic's staff, Board, artists, and audiences are a true reflection of our hometown. Mosaic's initiatives in Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access mean nearly 2000 seniors and students are receiving subsidized or free tickets and transportation assistance annually. Scores of performances each year are accessible to deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons with surtitles, American Sign Language interpreters and open captioning. The work of women playwrights is supported with the **Trish Vradenburg Commissioning Program**. Over 500 public programming events have engaged patrons, artists and experts about the art - building community through civic dialogue. The acclaimed **Voices from a Changing Middle East Festival** continues to amplify crucial under-represented points of view from the region.

Five years of innovative mission-driven theater-making and whirlwind growth is worthy of a Mosaic-style celebration. Numerous events throughout Mosaic's 5th Anniversary Season will be announced soon including a March 2020 5th Anniversary Season Celebration and culminating in a #WOKE Mosaic community learning trip to Israel-Palestine and points beyond in September 2020.

Mosaic Theater Company of DC's 2019-2020 #WOKESEASON5:

August 21-September 22, 2019

FABULATION

By Lynn Nottage | Directed by Eric Ruffin

At the Atlas Performing Arts Center, Lang Theatre

PRESS/OPENING NIGHT: Monday, August 26, 2019 @ 7:30 PM

Two-time Pulitzer Prize and MacArthur Genius Award recipient Lynn Nottage's satirical tale that follows successful African-American publicist Undine, as she stumbles down the social ladder after her husband steals her hard-earned fortune. Broke and now pregnant, Undine is forced to return to her childhood home in the projects, where she must face the realities of the life she left behind. Penned with "the firecracker snap of unexpected humor" (*New York Times*), *Fabulation* reveals the folly of outrunning where we come from, and the challenge of returning home.

"Delightful and very funny, delivering sharp observations about social and racial identity." - *Frank Scheck, The Hollywood Reporter*

October 22-November 17, 2019

THEORY

By Norman Yeung | Directed by Victoria Murray Baatin

At the Atlas Performing Arts Center, Lang Theatre

PRESS/OPENING NIGHT: Monday, October 28 at 7:30 PM

Isabelle, a young tenure-track professor, tests the limits of free speech by encouraging her students to contribute to an unmoderated discussion group. When an anonymous student posts offensive comments and videos, Isabelle must decide whether to intervene or to let the social experiment play out. Soon, the posts turn abusive and threatening, leading Isabelle and her unknown tormentor to engage in a high-stakes game of cat-and-mouse that not only have Isabelle questioning her beliefs, but fearing for her life.

"Turns a free-speech debate at a university into a techno-thriller. Norman Yeung's *Theory* is the right play for the right time." - *Globe and Mail, Toronto*

December 14, 2019-January 5, 2020

EUREKA DAY

By Jonathan Spector | Directed by Serge Seiden

At the Atlas Performing Arts Center, Sprenger Theatre

PRESS/OPENING NIGHT: Monday, December 9 at 7:30 PM

At Eureka Day School in Berkeley, CA, all decisions are made by consensus, diversity and inclusion are valued, and vaccinations are a personal matter. When a mumps outbreak hits the school, it turns out that not everyone in the community has the same definition of social justice. Now the board of directors must confront the central question: how do you find consensus when you can't agree on the facts?

"Uproarious! Jonathan Spector's play is so crisply defined that you might have to periodically remind yourself that you haven't already met these characters in real life..." - *San Francisco Chronicle*

January 16, 2020-February 16, 2020

Voices from a Changing Middle East Festival

PILGRIMS MUSA AND SHERI IN THE NEW WORLD

By Yuseff El Guindi | Directed by Shirley Serotsky

At the Atlas Performing Arts Center, Sprenger Theatre

PRESS/OPENING NIGHT: Monday, January 20 at 7:30 PM

From the Egyptian-American winner of the Steinberg New American Play Award comes a romantic comedy about Muslim and American identity full of unexpected twists. The dilemma Musa faces is familiar enough: To make a safe and sensible match, or take a risk on an exciting someone who might—just might—be the One Great Romance of his life? Musa, a new immigrant from Egypt who drives a cab, picks up Sheri, a boisterous and quirky waitress, after her shift and a night of improbable passion turns into an extended labyrinth of cultural assumptions upended.

"A Romeo and Juliet story—an Annie Hall story, a West Side Story story—for Americans in the 21st century. And perhaps for all people in this back-and-forth, from-one-home-to-another, permanently globalized world." —*The Stranger (Seattle)*.

March 11-March 29, 2020

Part of Locally Grown Mosaic

INHERIT THE WINDBAG

By Alexandra Petri | Directed by Lee Mikeska Gardner

At the Atlas Performing Arts Center, Lang Theatre

PRESS/OPENING NIGHT: Monday, March 16 at 7:30 PM

WORLD PREMIERE: In the summer of 1968, liberal Gore Vidal and conservative William F. Buckley met for a series of debates that rocked America and defined the genre of punditry. Now, for one evening only, Vidal and Buckley meet in the Dismal Beyond (also known as the Richard Nixon Library in Yorba Linda, CA) to reprise their infamous debate. What ensues is a battle for history itself, in a no-holds-barred

sesquipedalian brawl and satirical battle of wits, assisted by an ever-revolving cast of characters from Aaron Burr to Ayn Rand.

“Playwright and *Washington Post* humorist Alexandra Petri once again delivers a delightfully and deliriously funny production.” – *Washington City Paper* (For: *To Tell My Story: A Hamlet Fanfic*)

April 1-June 21, 2020

THE TILL TRILOGY

By Ifa Bayeza | Directed by Talvin Wilkes

At the Atlas Performing Arts Center, Lang Theatre

Made possible by a generous grant from The Roy Cockrum Foundation

PART I: THE BALLAD OF EMMETT TILL

PRESS/OPENING NIGHT: Monday, April 6 at 7:30 PM

Bayeza’s Edgar Award-winning drama recounts Emmett Till’s journey during the last two weeks of his life. The work is a contemporary revelation of Emmett’s youthful, boisterous, stuttering character, a recreation of the teenager’s journey from Chicago to Mississippi and his fateful encounter with Caroline Bryant, the young white woman whose accusation that Emmett whistled at and then threatened her, led to Emmett’s murder.

“Brilliant Symphony of Love, melodic, rich, passionate ... A powerful masterpiece.”
—*Houston Chronicle*

“Bayeza’s portrayal reclaims Emmett Till as a human being ... emotionally gripping.”
—*Variety*

PART II: THAT SUMMER IN SUMNER

PRESS/OPENING NIGHT: Monday, May 4 at 7:30 PM

This world premiere staging recreates the 1955 trial, “The State of Mississippi vs. Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam for the Murder of Emmett Till.” Drawn from extant courtroom transcript, contemporaneous news accounts, government records and interviews, this new installment condenses the five-day trial into a compact 110 minute drama. Based on trial transcripts, contemporaneous news accounts, interviews and photo-documentation from a case broken open by the national black press exposing miscarriages of justice at every turn.

PART III: BENEVOLENCE

PRESS/OPENING NIGHT: Tuesday, June 2 at 7:30 PM

The stirring conclusion of *The Till Trilogy* examines the broader social impact of the murder of Emmett Till on a more intimate scale. In Act I, we meet Caroline Bryant, her husband Roy, and twin brother Ray of Money, Mississippi on the days before and after Emmett's abduction, leaping forward 50 years and the partial recantation of much of Caroline's testimony. In Act II we shift to the neighboring town of Glendora and meet Clinton and Beulah Melton, witnesses to Emmett's murder, whose lives are now in jeopardy because of the information they possess.

"In its intimate, domestic settings, it achieves an epic scale." - *Star-Tribune* (Minneapolis)

About The Roy Cockrum Foundation: The Roy Cockrum Foundation enables theaters to reach beyond their normal scope of activities and undertake ambitious and creative productions. It awards major grants to support world-class performing arts projects in not-for-profit professional theaters throughout the United States of America.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON MOSAIC THEATER COMPANY OF DC'S NEW SEASON: <https://www.mosaictheater.org/season-five>

VALET PARKING AVAILABLE AT 1360 H ST NE on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings, as well as Saturday and Sunday matinees.

About Mosaic Theater Company of DC

Independent, intercultural, entertaining, and uncensored, Mosaic Theater Company of DC is committed to making transformational, socially-relevant art, producing plays by authors on the front lines of conflict zones, and building a fusion community to address some of the most pressing issues of our times. Dedicated to making our theater a model of diversity and inclusion at every strata, on stage and off, Mosaic invests in the new as we keep abreast of our changing and challenging times to ensure that our theater is a responsive gathering space, all the while nurturing and producing art of the highest order. Visit us at [mosaictheater.org](https://www.mosaictheater.org)