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
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Press Night: Monday, August 26 at 7:30 pm

August 1, 2019

Mosaic Theater Company of DC opens its Season 5 with “Fabulation Or, The Re-Education of Undine” from Pulitzer Prize and MacArthur “Genius” Award-winning playwright, Lynn Nottage, featuring Felicia Curry.

WASHINGTON, D.C — Mosaic Theater Company of DC is proud to announce its season opener, Fabulation Or, The Re-Education of Undine by Lynn Nottage, starring Helen Hayes Award winner (and two time HHA host) Felicia Curry in the title role (see full bio below), with a stellar supporting cast including Roz White (Mosaic’s Marie and Rosetta) as Undine’s mother, and Aakhu TuahNera Freeman as the Grandmother (Death of a Salesman at Ford’s Theatre), directed by Eric Ruffin (director of the multiple Helen Hayes Award winning Black Nativity at Theatre Alliance). Mosaic is producing Fabulation at The Atlas Performing Arts Center from August 21 through September 22, 2019 to kick off its fifth season producing on H Street in Northeast DC.

The satirical tale follows successful African-American publicist Undine Barnes-Calles as she stumbles down the social ladder after her smooth-talking husband, Hervé 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" (The New York Times), Fabulation is a comic comeuppance tale that reveals the folly of outrunning where we come from, and the challenge of returning home.

“Lynn Nottage is one of the most esteemed playwrights of our time,” notes Mosaic Founding Artistic Director, Ari Roth, pointing to the playwright’s body of work (Ruined, Sweat, Crumbs From the Table of Joy; see full bio below) which has been nationally relevant for three decades. “It promises to be another banner year for Lynn Nottage, as it was last season when Signature Theatre in New York made her the center of their season, producing several works including Fabulation, revealing the comedy’s timeliness as a Reverse Gentrification journey along with its caustic critique of mad money materialism.” This winter, one of Nottage’s first breakout plays, Intimate Apparel, gets transformed into an opera at the Metropolitan Opera in
co-production with Lincoln Center Theatre and staged by Broadway director Bartlett Sher.

“Fabulation is a highly textured, multi-faceted comedy that can be appreciated beyond its timeliness, to value the more powerful timelessness of its journey homeward,” expounds Roth. “It’s never received such a culturally-saturated, Africana-infused production as this, emphasizing the character’s return to Yoruban roots, with a pan-African spirit enveloping each transition, underpinnings of which are solidly embedded in the text, but brought out more dominantly in Eric Ruffin’s production for the play’s DC debut.”

Production Dramaturg Faedra Carpenter elaborates on the play’s Yoruban influences, “Undine’s foray into West African belief systems epitomizes the larger tale of Fabulation: a dramatic rumination duality and doubleness, paradox and contradiction, indeterminacy and uncertainty. In conjuring (Yoruban Deity) Elegba as both a metaphor and transitory spirit within her play, Lynn Nottage plays upon the deity's signature multiplicity. While the central premise of Elegba’s duality can be found in countless examples of African American artistic expression, it also speaks profoundly to W.E.B DuBois’ cultural theory of double-consciousness.”

Notes Eric Ruffin, “Fabulation is titillating for me because of its constant display of contradictions. The sacred and profane; opulence and squalor; refinement and coarseness; rage and joy; beauty and the grotesque; chaos and stillness; passion and logic. It mirrors the ebb and flow of our lives. Undine is at a crossroads, unable to progress or evolve because of her choice to reject her familial ties, reject her identity. Her working class roots are the antithesis of the persona she’s created. And, her ascension in America is without foundation, leaving her spiritually vapid. We aspire to rise up in the melting pot that is America. But at what cost . . .”

Bringing Ruffin’s staging to life will be an all-star eight person ensemble taking on multiple roles. Featured in the title role is musical theater star Felicia Curry (and Helen Hayes Award winning actress for her role Factory 449’s drama, Lela & Co). She is joined by Aakhu TuahNera Freeman in the role of Grandma (and others); Roz White in the role of Mother (and others); William T. Newman, Jr. (Father; Gospel at Colonus at WSC); Carlos Saldaña (Hervé; After The Revolution at Theater J); Lauryn Simone (Stephie; Children of Killers at Castillo Theatre); Kevin E. Thorne II (Flow; I Killed My Mother at Spooky Action); and James Whalen (the Accountant, After The War at Mosaic).

Further animating Ruffin’s vision will be an expanded design team including set designer Andrew Cohen (Satchmo At The Waldorf for Mosaic); lighting designer John D. Alexander (Marie and Rosetta for Mosaic); costume designer, Moyenda Kulemeka (The Brothers Size at 1st Stage); sound designer Cresent R. Haynes (Emitted Visions
Entertainment); rhythm and musical consultant, Christylez Bacon (Washington Sound Museum); and movement consultant, Rashida Bumbray (Funk, God, Jazz, and Medicine: Black Radical Brooklyn).

Following select performances of Fabulation, Mosaic will host a series of post-show discussions exploring resonant themes present in both works with a diverse set of panelists. These free post-show discussions, beginning immediately after the performance, include cast talkbacks on August 22, August 25, September 12, and September 19, and will cover topics such as:

- “Moving On Up: The Black Middle Class” (September 8, following the matinee)
- “Abandonment(s): Upward (and Downward) Mobility and Finding a Path Home” (September 14, following the matinee)
- “Self-Fashioning and/or Alter Egos” (September 7, following the matinee)
- “A Spotlight on Black Women Playwrights” (August 31, following the matinee)

A full list of discussion dates and discussant bios for Fabulation will be available on http://www.mosaictheater.org/discussions

Bios

Lynn Nottage (Playwright) a Pulitzer Prize winning playwright and a screenwriter. Her plays have been produced widely in the United States and throughout the world. Her most recent play, Mlima’s Tale, premiered at the Public Theater in May 2018. In the spring of 2017, Sweat (Pulitzer Prize, Obie Award, Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Tony Nomination, Drama Desk Nomination) moved to Broadway after a sold out run at The Public Theater. It premiered and was commissioned by Oregon Shakespeare Festival American Revolutions History Cycle/Arena Stage.

Other plays include By The Way, Meet Vera Stark (Lilly Award, Drama Desk Nomination), Ruined (Pulitzer Prize, OBIE, Lucille Lortel, New York Drama Critics’ Circle, Audelco, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Award), Intimate Apparel (American Theatre Critics and New York Drama Critics’ Circle Awards for Best Play), Fabulation, or The Re-Education of Undine (OBIE Award), Crumbs from the Table of Joy, Las Meninas, Mud, River, Stone, Por’knockers and POOF!. She developed This is Reading, a performance installation based on two years of interviews, at the Franklin Street, Reading Railroad Station in Reading, PA in July 2017. She is working with composer Ricky Ian Gordon on adapting her play Intimate Apparel into an opera, commissioned by The Met/LCT. She is currently an artist-in-residence at the Park Avenue Armory.
She is the co-founder of the production company, Market Road Films, whose most recent projects include *The Notorious Mr. Bout* directed by Tony Gerber and Maxim Pozdorovkin (Premiere/Sundance 2014), *First to Fall* directed by Rachel Beth Anderson (Premiere/IDFA, 2013) and *Remote Control* (Premiere/Busan 2013 - New Currents Award). Over the years, she has developed original projects for HBO, Sidney Kimmel Entertainment, Showtime, This is That and Harpo. She is writer/producer on the Netflix series *She's Gotta Have It*, directed by Spike Lee.

Nottage is the recipient of a MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship, Steinberg "Mimi" Distinguished Playwright Award, PEN/Laura Pels Master Playwright Award, Merit and Literature Award from The Academy of Arts and Letters, Columbia University Provost Grant, Doris Duke Artist Award, The Joyce Foundation Commission Project & Grant, Madge Evans–Sidney Kingsley Award, Nelson A. Rockefeller Award for Creativity, The Dramatists Guild Hull–Warriner Award, the inaugural Horton Foote Prize, Helen Hayes Award, the Lee Reynolds Award, and the Jewish World Watch iWitness Award. Her other honors include the National Black Theatre Fest's August Wilson Playwriting Award, a Guggenheim Grant, Lucille Lortel Fellowship and Visiting Research Fellowship at Princeton University. She is a graduate of Brown University and the Yale School of Drama. She is also an Associate Professor in the Theatre Department at Columbia School of the Arts.

**Eric Ruffin** (Director) His most recent directing credits include *A Raisin in the Sun* for Lyric Rep, Three Cheers for Grace for Young Playwright’s Theatre, *Sarafina!* (Kennedy Center and Mann Center), *Black Nativity* for Theater Alliance (11 Helen Hayes Nominations/ 3 Awards including Best Musical), *2–2 Tango* at Studio Theatre, *Christmas Gift* at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, *A Raisin in the Sun* at Crossroads Theatre, *Old Settler* for The African Continuum Theatre Company, *Gutta Beautiful* at New Federal Theatre, *New Kid* for Imagination Stage, and the critically acclaimed New Jersey premiere of *Topdog/Underdog* for Luna Stage. He has also directed *Radio Golf, Hurt Village, Venus, Passing Strange, and Cut Flowers* at the Ira Aldridge Theatre (Howard University) in addition to *In The Blood, Antigone, In Arabia We’d All Be Kings, Jesus Hopped the “A” Train* and *Our Lady of 121st Street* for the Rutgers Theatre Company.

Ruffin holds a B.F.A. in Theatre Arts from Howard University and an MFA in Directing from Rutgers University. He is a Society for Stage Directors and Choreographers Associate and currently serves as a Woolly Mammoth board member. He is a New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspect and a recipient of the Drama League Directing Fellowship. He has also been honored with a Shakespeare Theatre Acting Fellowship, and the Princess Grace Grant for Dance.
Felicia Curry (Undine) is making her debut at Mosaic Theater Company.
OFF-BROADWAY: We Three Lizas, DMLRR: The Brontes, Petite Rouge. NATIONAL TOURS: KC: Roald Dahl’s Willy Wonka, Mattel/Live Nation: Barbie Live!, Capitol Steps. REGIONAL: VA Repertory Theatre: The Color Purple [RTCC Award], Gulfshore Playhouse, Riverside Center for the Performing Arts. DC AREA: Signature Theatre, Ford’s Theatre (Artistic Associate), Arena Stage, Factory 449 (Company Member): Lela & Co. [Helen Hayes Award], The Kennedy Center, Woolly Mammoth Theatre, Round House Theatre, Studio Theatre, Rep Stage, MetroStage, Adventure Theatre, Imagination Stage, Toby’ Columbia. AWARDS: 7 Helen Hayes nominations, 3 Helen Hayes Awards for Outstanding Ensemble. Two–time host of the Helen Hayes Awards. Featured in the Washington Post (12 Stage Dynamos) and Washingtonian Magazine (10 Stage Stars). EDUCATION: UMCP.

Aakhu TuahNera Freeman (Grandma)
William T. Newman, Jr. (Father)
Carlos Saldaña (Hervé)
Lauryn Simone (Stephie)
Kevin E. Thorne II (Flow)
James Whalen (the Accountant)
Roz White (Mother)

Additional Information about Fabulation:
Pay What You Can Preview: Wednesday, August 21 at 8 PM
Opening/Press Night: Monday, August 26 at 7:30 PM
Closes: Sunday, September 22 at 3:00 PM
Ticket Prices: $20–$65
Performance Times: 8 PM Wednesday–Saturday; 3 PM Saturday & Sunday

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: https://www.mosaictheater.org/fabulation

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