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
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Press Night: Monday, June 24 at 7:30 pm

June 6, 2019

Baltimore Center Stage and Congo Square Theatre Company in association with The Apollo Theater and Mosaic Theater Company of DC present Twisted Melodies, the story of 70s soul legend Donny Hathaway's final 24 hours, his battle with mental illness and internal struggles.

WASHINGTON, D.C — Mosaic Theater Company of DC, buoyed by support from National Endowment for the Arts for its first-ever Art Works grant, is proud to announce the DC premiere of Twisted Melodies written by and starring Kelvin Roston, Jr. and directed by Derrick Sanders. Mosaic is producing Twisted Melodies at The Atlas Performing Arts Center from June 19 through July 21, 2019.

This powerful solo show, based on the life of '70s soul singer and composer Donny Hathaway, imagines the troubled and brilliant musician's last day on Earth in an immersive, audience involving, call-and-response performance about Hathaway's compelling inner struggle. Perhaps best known for his chart-topping duets with fellow Howard University classmate, Roberta Flack ("The Closer I Get To You"), the play unveils Hathaway’s brilliant but tragically short career. Torn between the muses that inspire him and the mental illness that torments him, Hathaway evaluates the choices in his life in a gripping performance by Kelvin Roston, Jr.

On the evolution of Twisted Melodies, author, performer and musical director Kelvin Roston, Jr – a St. Louis native, like Donny Hathaway – says, “From the start, I had imagined Donny's last day, last hours, on earth; but I hadn't really focused on mental issues. I followed his career and family and his music and all that, but his mental health wasn't that big a part. And, you know, there's such a taboo around mental illness in America—in Black America, even more so. I guess I was worried or afraid about going into that. But we dove in, and the show and that time with Donny—in his mind and his spirit—really became a safe space for the audience, and me. A place for exploring all the problems and fears and images, and how it actually became part of him and his music, even of his genius. It is really a journey inside Donny's mind and heart as well as a look at his musical greatness.”
Mosaic Founding Artistic Director, Ari Roth, reflecting on Mosaic’s Season Four finale, notes: “We’re honored to be partnering with great institutions like Baltimore Center Stage, where we first saw this extraordinary show 3 years ago, along with Congo Square of Chicago, where the show originated, and the great Apollo Theatre in Harlem where New York audiences just went crazy for this love letter to a troubled, African-American genius composer, performer, arranger and recording artist. The play does a beautiful job of re-capturing what it was like to be coming-of-age and into one’s own as an artist in DC in the 60’s. We watch Donny and Roberta Flack connect and make beautiful music, then go their separate ways, only to return to record their biggest hits just when Donny needs her most. Watching this play with a DC audience so familiar with the Hathaway songbook, and with easy retrieving of memories from Howard University at that time, should be an incredible experience. We’ve never had such excitement and anticipation for a show before its come. That’s in no small measure because of Hathaway’s powerful, poignant legacy, and Kelvin Roston’s much talked-about performance, its own legend in-the-making.”

Following select performances of Twisted Melodies, and supported by a National Endowment for the Arts grant awarded during Mosaic’s first year of eligibility, 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, will cover topics such as:

- “Artistic Genius and Mental Health: Unleashing Creativity, Rejecting Stigma”
- “HBCUs: A Home for Black Artists and Musicians”
- “The Stigma (And Discrimination) for Black Artists and Musicians”
- “Holy High Notes: The Sacred and the Secular”

Mosaic Theater Company of DC is proud to be the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Art Works grant of $10,000 to support TWISTED MELODIES. Art Works is the Arts Endowment’s principal grantmaking program. “These awards, reaching every corner of the United States, are a testament to the artistic richness and diversity in our country,” said Mary Anne Carter, acting chairman of the NEA. “Organizations such as Mosaic are giving people in their community the opportunity to learn, create, and be inspired.”

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

Bios

**Kelvin Roston Jr** (Donny Hathaway, Playwright) is an actor/singer/musician based in Chicago, IL. Playwriting credits include: *Twisted Melodies*. National credits include: Black Rep, Metro, Union Ave Opera, Writers, Goodman, Steppenwolf, Court, Black
Ensemble, Marriott-Lincolnshire (Chicago, IL), Paramount (Aurora, IL), Fulton, MSMT. International: Orb (Tokyo, Japan), Festival Hall (Osaka, Japan). TV: KFC, Chicago PD, Chicago Med. Film: Princess Cyd, Get a Job, Beautiful Hands. Professional: Artistic Associate of Congo Square Theater Co. Kelvin is represented by Paonessa Talent in Chicago and is a proud member of AEA.

Derrick Sanders (Director) Baltimore Center Stage: My America Too, Clybourne Park, Beneatha’s Place, Joe Turner’s Come and Gone. Off Broadway: Signature: King Hedley II. Regional: Kennedy Center: August Wilson’s 20th Century Cycle: Seven Guitars, King Hedley II; Cincinnati Playhouse: Gee’s Bend (Acclaim Awards: Best Director, Outstanding Production); Virginia Stage Co: Fences, Radio Golf; Barebones: Jesus Hopped the A Train; Lincoln Center Theater: Sanctified; Chicago Children's Theatre: Bud, Not Buddy, Jackie and Me (world premiere); American Theatre Co: Topdog/Underdog; True Colors: Jitney, Stick Fly; Minneapolis Children’s Theater: Five Fingers of Funk (world premiere); Congo Square: Elmina’s Kitchen (Midwest premiere); Joe Turner’s Come and Gone (Black Theatre Alliance Awards, Best Production and Direction); Seven Guitars (Jeff Awards, Best Production and Direction), Deep Azure (world premiere), The House That Jack Built, Ali (Black Theatre Alliance Award); Kuntu Rep: A Cryin’ Shame; ETA Creative Arts Theatre Co.: Why Black Men Play Basketball. Other Professional: Congo Square Founding Artistic Director; Assistant Director: Broadway/Goodman/Mark Taper/Huntington: Gem Ocean, and Broadway/Goodman: Radio Golf.

Additional Information about Twisted Melodies:
Pay What You Can Preview: Wednesday, June 19 at 8 PM
Opening/Press Night: Monday, June 24 at 7:30 PM
Closes: Sunday, July 21 at 7:30 PM
Ticket Prices: $20-$65
Performance Times: 8 PM Wednesday–Saturday; 3 PM Saturday & Sunday

TO DOWNLOAD PRODUCTION PHOTOS CLICK HERE: http://bit.ly/TwistedMelodiesPhotos

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: https://www.mosaictheater.org/twisted-melodies

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