

Mosaic Theater Company Media Release

Ari Roth, *Founding Artistic Director* • Serge Seiden, *Managing Director & Producer*



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MOSAIC THEATER COMPANY OF DC ANNOUNCES 36 ACTORS SLATED FOR 2015-16 INAUGURAL SEASON

Helen Hayes Award winners and DC favorites join internationally recognized artists and strong newcomers in a company committed to telling diverse stories.

(Washington, DC) Mosaic Theater Company of DC announces **36 actors so-far cast in the 2015-16 inaugural season: "The Case for Hope in a Polarized World."** This far-reaching pool of locally and internationally acclaimed actors represents a commitment to telling the stories most pressing to our communities. These artists, over half of whom are actors of color, join Mosaic Theater Company in one of the most diversely cast seasons in Washington.

Taking the stage this year will be a strong group of known DC favorites, including Helen Hayes Award winners **Erika Rose** (reuniting this year with *In Darfur* director, Derek Goldman) and **Deidra LaWan Starnes** (*Intimate Apparel*, *Doubt: A Parable*), as well as Helen Hayes Award nominees **Doug Brown** (*Our Lady of 121st Street*), **Bill Grimmette** (*Blood Knot*), **Paul Morella** (*Angels in America*), **Barbara Rappaport** (*A...My Name is Alice*) and **Michael Tolaydo** (*New Jerusalem: The Interrogation of Baruch De Spinoza*). Joining them are a large number of DC favorites including **Jeff Allin**, **Tonya Beckman**, **Aaron Bliden**, **Felipe Cabezas**, **Erica Chamblee**, **Shannon Dorsey**, **JaBen Early**, **Gary-Kayi Fletcher**, **Sean Fri**, **Manu H. Kumasi**, **John Lescault**, **Jason B. McIntosh**, **Lynette Rathnam**, **Jefferson A. Russell**, **Kathryn Tkel**, **Baakari Wilder** and **Michael Anthony Williams**.

"Our mission commits us to bringing communities together," says **Founding Artistic Director Ari Roth**. "While hardly a novel approach to making theater in this town, our commitment to diversity feels unique in recognizing that our setting at the Atlas gives us a rare opportunity to fuse local and global engagements—to bring the African and Middle East dramas into a resonance with the explosive conversations on race so relevant to our moment."

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Mosaic Theater Company is proud to feature three artists of international acclaim in the Voices From a Changing Middle East Festival, whose work will be seen in this season's three solo acts: *Wrestling Jerusalem*, featuring Jewish-American actor **Aaron Davidman**, *I Shall Not Hate*, featuring Palestinian actor **Gassan Abbas**, and *Hkeelee (Talk to Me)*, featuring Lebanese-American writer and performer **Leila Buck**.

“With generous commitments from Mosaic’s Board of Trustees, and an ever-growing list of supporters, Mosaic has been able to hit the ground running,” adds **Managing Director and Producer Serge Seiden**. “Over sixty percent of the actors cast in Mosaic’s inaugural season are members of the Actors Equity Association, and we’ve been able to contract union designers and directors as well. Ari, Jennifer and I are excited to let our artistic team loose on these three beautiful venues at the Atlas, presenting meaningful content to our audiences while maintaining the highest artistic standards.”

Rounding out the season is a collective of talented up-and-coming actors (and future favorites), including **Shravan Amin, Freddie Bennett, Audrey Bertaux, Desmond Bing, Silas Gordan Brigham, Jeremy Keith Hunter, Vaughn Ryan Midder, Awa Sal Secka** and **Brayden Simpson**. It is a season loaded with known and new faces, as well as many prominent women actors and playwrights underscoring the citywide commitment to female artists seen in this fall’s Women’s Voices Theater Festival.

“A good deal of what I love about theater is its capacity to explore and illuminate the rich possibilities of language,” shares **Resident Director Jennifer L. Nelson**. “Physical, spoken and visual language, it gives us the means to step outside our personal lives and into intimate interaction with others. It is in that interaction that we connect and challenge ourselves and each other to experience more than our personal experiences. That to me is the beauty and significance of theater: bringing members of our community together to share stories on an intimate, visceral level.”

This announcement comes at a momentous time for Mosaic Theater Company, just eight months after its founding and three months after the announcement of the 2015-16 inaugural season. With only two roles yet to be cast in the eight-play lineup (including one role for a child actor in *Unexplored Interior*), this accomplished ensemble represents the powerful coalition of support and excitement around this new company launching with considerable momentum.

For complete season information, visit mosaictheater.org/season. Additional creative team updates and full cast bios to be announced at a later date.

Mosaic 8 packages are now on sale and may be purchased by calling the Atlas Performing Arts Center box office at 202-399-7993 ext 2, or by visiting mosaictheater.org.

Casting for the 2015-16 season:

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Unexplored Interior

Jeff Allin, Shannon Dorsey, JaBen Early, Bill Grimmette, John Lescault, Erika Rose, Jefferson A. Russell, Michael Anthony Williams, Freddie Bennett, Desmond Bing, Silas Gordon Brigham, Jeremy Keith Hunter and Baakari Wilder

The Gospel of Lovingkindness

Doug Brown, Erica Chamblee, Manu H. Kumasi and Deidra LaWan Starnes

Wrestling Jerusalem

Aaron Davidman

I Shall Not Hate

Gassan Abbas

Eretz Chadasha: The Promised Land

Aaron Bliden, Felipe Cabezas, Gary-Kayi Fletcher, Kathryn Tkel, Audrey Bertaux, Awa Sal Secka and Brayden Simpson

After the War

Tonya Beckman, Sean Fri, Paul Morella, Barbara Rappaport and Michael Tolaydo

Hkeele (Talk to Me)

Leila Buck

When January Feels Like Summer

Jason B. McIntosh, Lynette Rathnam, Shravan Amin, Jeremy Keith Hunter and Vaughn Ryan Midder

Mosaic Theater Company of DC is committed to making powerful, transformational, socially-relevant art, producing plays by authors on the front lines of conflict zones and providing audiences with a dynamic new venue for the dramatizing and debating of ideas including an annual intercultural festival, like our acclaimed Voices From a Changing Middle East series.

With an emphasis on the playwright's vibrant voice, muscular structures and a powerful collaborative fusion with directors of vision and story-telling integrity, Mosaic plays marry a love of ideas, character, conflict, immediacy, and personal and public resonance, working with the finest actors in our city to create thrilling performances that matter. Our plays speak truth to power and to the private parts of our soul prompting reflection, discussion and uplift, while creating lasting impression; in short, we make art with a purpose and strive for impact.

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