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MOSAIC THEATER COMPANY OF DC OPENS INAUGURAL SEASON WITH
JAY O. SANDERS’ UNEXPLORED INTERIOR
(THIS IS RWANDA: THE BEGINNING AND END OF THE EARTH)
UNDER DIRECTION OF DEREK GOLDMAN
OCTOBER 29—NOVEMBER 29, 2015

Bill Grimmette and Desmond Bing lead all-star 14-member ensemble in this world-premiere play, 11 years in the making.

(Washington, DC) Mosaic Theater Company of DC announces its inaugural production, the epic world-premiere drama Unexplored Interior (This is Rwanda: The Beginning and End of the Earth) by longtime New York actor, first time playwright, Jay O. Sanders, to be staged by Helen Hayes Award-nominee Derek Goldman (Our Class, In Darfur) at the Atlas Performing Arts Center in the 260-seat Lang Theatre. This sweeping, assiduously researched play represents the scope and scale of Mosaic Theater Company’s artistic and cultural ambitions as a space for bold art and big conversation around some of the most pressing social issues of our day.

Unexplored Interior takes us deep into the heart of Rwanda and the people so radically transformed during those fateful months 21 years ago when 800,000 were killed in 100 days. The play follows Raymond (Desmond Bing), a film student at NYU, who is compelled by a mentor’s death to return to his homeland to uncover a deeper horror: the roots of violence that have destroyed his family and led to the unknown fate of his beloved grandfather, Felicien (Bill Grimmette), a Tutsi master storyteller, whom Raymond must find and whose legacy he seeks to redeem. The ghosts of King Leopold and Mark Twain (John Lescault) intertwine with other mysteries Raymond pursues in the course of making his own investigative film, as a jailed Hutu government minister (Michael Anthony Williams) recalls his love affair with a Tutsi woman (Shannon Dorsey), while Raymond's best friend Alphonse (Freddie Bennett) sits in prison as well for an unknown crime, and the Canadian head of UN peacekeepers, General Romeo Dallaire (Jeff Allin), is haunted by those who he was unable to save and struggles with his own will to live.

"Why are we opening our inaugural season with a brand new play about genocide in Africa?” asks Mosaic Theater Founding Artistic Director, Ari Roth. "Because Mosaic is an identity-driven theater, made up of artists and audiences from diverse backgrounds, fused by our connection to traumatic history. As African-Americans, Jews, Catholics, Muslims, South Asians, Africans, we have all been ravaged by loss; disfigured by violence. The persistence of genocide in our time forces us to summon Holocaust history and understand how atrocities still live in our moment; how African-American identity is heightened by an identification with the under-told story of African pain. Conjoining these consciousnesses makes for a kinetic fusion, and that's what we have with this inaugural

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production. A joyfully animated ensemble brings a story of urgency to a new DC stage. That's both cause for celebration, and commemoration."

Roth continues, "The world's response to the unleashing of violence in Rwanda was shamefully passive. The United Nations' demurral to intervene was shameful. As the US Holocaust Memorial Museum was opening its doors 11 months earlier, attracting record numbers of crowds in its first year of operation in 1993, we saw the phrase "Never Again" rendered hollow as an average of 333 people were murdered every hour, every day, 24 hours a day, for 100 days straight. In our life time. Never again. Our response was Hurricane Katrina-like... We got there too late. We got there with aid, after the killing. Where was the UN? Our task now is one of Corrective Remembrance—through purposeful, artful, authentic humanizing and memorializing, we remember Rwanda as it was, as it must become anew from all that was lost."

A labor of love, *Unexplored Interior* represents the dedication of an artist driven to confront some of the world's most impenetrable injustices, and the enduring support of a far-reaching artistic community that has nurtured this project for years—including a series of workshops and readings at Cherry Lane Theatre, The Public Theater, Lark Theater and The Flea Theater—as well as a groundbreaking partnership with Google through which a public reading at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York in 2014 was live-streamed to the Kigali Genocide Memorial Center in Rwanda in commemoration of the 20-year anniversary of the genocide.

"I have been working relentlessly for the last ten years to bring human attention, understanding and connection to the tragedy of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda," explains playwright Jay O. Sanders. "In it, I saw my own ignorance and was determined to undo it. At the center of the world's relationship to Rwanda is a basic inability to comprehend, and therefore a wish to side-step, one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century. A tragedy made possible because collectively we looked away and allowed it to happen."

"I feel tremendously honored to be working on the world premiere of Jay O. Sanders' brave and hugely ambitious play as the inaugural Mosaic production," shares director Derek Goldman. "It's meaningful not only because the play is a remarkable window into a devastating piece of contemporary history that we must never forget (and that many of us know too little about), but it launches an important new center in the DC theatrical landscape for socially-relevant performances that matter—with Mosaic's first-rate team working under Ari, Serge Seiden and Jennifer Nelson's creative leadership. It was inspiring during our auditions to experience firsthand the extraordinary depth of the talent pool, especially for young actors of color in our city, which has been largely under-tapped until now."

This inaugural production features an expansive and diverse 14-member ensemble of local actors, representing the breadth of DC talent. The company is led by Helen Hayes Award-nominee and Arena Stage veteran Bill Grimmette (*Blood Knot*) as the aged storyteller Felicien, and relative-newcomer Desmond Bing (Arena Stage’s upcoming *All the Way*), who plays his young filmmaker grandson Raymond. They are joined by Helen Hayes Award winner Erika Rose (*In Darfur*), reuniting here with director Goldman, along with DC favorites Jeff Allin (*After The Revolution*), JaBen A. Early (*The Convert*), Shannon Dorsey (Arena Stage’s upcoming *All the Way*), John Lecault (*Life Sucks*), Jefferson A. Russell (*Ironbound*) and Michael Anthony Williams (*King Hedley II*).

Goldman continues, "This story about a young Rwandan artist trying to come to terms with the legacy of his people and the death of his entire family speaks to all of us concerned with theater's capacity to speak truth to power, and to humanize others whose lives may seem remote, but whose humanity is very much our own."

The production is complemented by a host of community engagement events, including panels with expert policy makers, the return of the acclaimed Peace Café, community conversations, and Friday happy hours. Confirmed panelists include the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Michael Abramowitz, United States Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues Stephen Rapp, and research associate with the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Rwanda Genocide Donna J. Maier.

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Jay O. Sanders (*Playwright*) has spent the last 40 years as a stage and screen actor, and has been the voice behind a long list of documentaries for PBS and National Geographic. After graduating with the first theater class of S.U.N.Y. at Purchase, he began his career at NY’s Shakespeare in the Park, then joined the resident company here in D.C. at Arena Stage under Zelda Fichandler. He has played many of the great roles in Shakespeare and other classics and has devoted much of his time to birthing new American plays. He is an original cast member of Richard Nelson’s *Apple Family* series, created over the course of four years at the Public Theater, filmed for WNET in 2013, and recently toured Europe. His feature films include *The Day After Tomorrow, Half Nelson, JFK, Edge of Darkness*, *Tumbleweeds, Glory*, and *Angels in the Outfield*.

Derek Goldman (*Director*) is an award-winning director and playwright/adapter, producer, developer of new work and published scholar, whose work has been seen around the country and internationally. Recent highlights include *Grounded* (Everyman and Olney), *Our Class* (Helen Hayes Nomination for Outstanding Resident Play) and *In Darfur* (with Erika Rose, Helen Hayes Award for Lead Actress) at Theater J, and *Three Men in a Boat* (Synetic).

The creative team for *Unexplored Interior* includes choreographer Vincent Thomas (*Brother’s Size*), set designer Lucianna Stecconi (*Bad Jews*), lighting designer Harold F. Burgess II (*Grounded*), costume designer Ivania Stack (*The Motherfucker with the Hat*), properties designer Michelle Elwyn (*The Admission*), sound designer Christopher Baine (*The BFG*), projections designer Jared Mezzocchi (*Race*), dialect coach Kim James Bey (*Ruined*), fight choreographer Paul Gallagher (*The Admission*), technical director Michael Redman and production stage manager Kate Kilbane.

For full company bios and additional production information visit mosaictheater.org/unexplored-interior/. The full cast list is included below.

*Unexplored Interior* Updated Special Events and Community Programming Schedule *(all discussions are free of charge and subject to change)*

1. **Talkback with playwright Jay O. Sanders in conversation with artistic director, Ari Roth:** 11/1 following the 8:00 PM performance
2. **Mosaic Happy Hour:** discounted drinks in the Atlas Lobby, 11/6 from 7:00-8:00 PM
3. **Panel on Ethnic Hatred with Survivors of Conflict:** 11/7 following the 3:00 PM performance moderated by Andrea Barron from the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC) with Elshafei Dafalla (from Sudan), H.R.H. Forchenmbin Charles (Cameroon), and Helen (pseudonym, Ethiopia).
4. **Holocaust Survivors Reflect on Genocide in our Time:** 11/8 following the 4:00 PM performance with survivors Margit Meissner and Dr. Al Munzer, and moderated by Levine Institute for Holocaust Education Director Michael J. Abramowitz.
5. **Conflict, Justice & Hope: A Theatrical Presentation & Discussion:** 11/9 at 12:00 PM at the University of Maryland School of Public Policy Atrium featuring playwright Jay O. Sanders and actors Bill Grimmette, Desmond Bing, and Freddie Bennett, as well as Senior Research Scholar David Crocker, and Independent Consultant on the Arts and International Affairs Katherine Wood
6. **Author Interview:** 11/12 at 12:00 PM at the Library of Congress featuring Playwright Jay O. Sanders in conversation with Chief of the African Middle Eastern Division, Eve Ferguson
7. **Talkback with the Cast:** 11/12 following the 7:30 PM performance
8. **Rwandan War Crimes and Transitional Justice:** 11/3 following the 8:00 PM performance, featuring United States Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues Stephen Rapp and research associate with the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Rwanda Genocide Donna J. Maier
9. **Peace Café: On Post-Conflict Reconciliation:** 11/4 following the 3:00 PM performance, featuring Pulitzer Prize-winning author David K. Shipler
10. **Returning Peace Corps Volunteers Panel:** 11/15 beginning at 3:00 PM featuring an interactive Twitter café, and playwright Jay O. Sanders

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11. **Mosaic Board of Directors night**: Board-led discussion 11/17 following the 7:30 PM performance
12. **Community Conversation**: 11/18 beginning at 7:00 PM facilitated by Brave Soul Collective founder Monte J. Wolfe
13. **The Artist's Responsibility as Witness**: 11/19 following the 11:00 AM and 7:30 PM performances, featuring Witness Responsibility founder Stacie Chaiken and Rwandan community organizer Mary H. Uwera
14. **Mosaic Happy Hour**: discounted drinks in the Atlas Lobby, 11/12 from 7:00-8:00 PM
15. **Conversation with Wharton Social Impact Initiative Professor Katherine Klein and playwright Jay O. Sanders**: 11/24 following the 7:30 PM performance
16. **The Mark Twain We Never Knew**: 11/28 following the 3:00 PM performance, featuring cast member John Lescault

*Unexplored Interior* Opening Night:
November 2, 2015 at 7:30 pm
Mosaic Theater Company staff, board, and affiliated artists celebrate the opening of the inaugural performance! For further information, or for tickets, contact Contessa Riggs at 202-399-7993 ext 157, or email contessa@mosaictheater.org.

**Production Information**

*Unexplored Interior (This is Rwanda: The Beginning and End of the Earth)*
By Jay O. Sanders
Directed by Derek Goldman
October 29—November 29, 2015

**ABOUT**: Mosaic Theater launches its inaugural season with a world-premiere epic about the madness and majesty of Rwanda. Raymond, a film student at NYU enthralled with the mysteries of Alfred Hitchcock, is compelled by a mentor's death to return to Rwanda to uncover a deeper horror story: the roots of violence that have destroyed his family, including his beloved grandfather, a Tutsi master storyteller whose legacy Raymond seeks to redeem. The ghosts of King Leopold and Mark Twain intertwine with other plot lines Raymond pursues as a Hutu government minister falls in love with a Tutsi woman and the head of UN peacekeepers, haunted by those he was unable to save, struggles with his own will to live. Staged by Derek Goldman (*Our Class, In Darfur*), this production takes place in the 260-seat Lang Theatre.

**CAST**:
Alan / Gen. Romeo Dallaire: Jeff Allin
Alphonse: Freddie Bennett
Raymond: Desmond Bing
Belgian Peacekeeper: Silas Gordon Bringham
Cat-Reen Bunanyezi: Shannon Dorsey
Innocent: JaBen A. Early
Ensemble: Christian R. Gibbs
Felicien: Bill Grimmette
Mark Twain: John Lescault
Boy: Isaiah Mays
Kate: Erika Rose
Col. Bagasora: Jefferson A. Russell
Presidential Guard, DJ, Man at Door: Baakari Wilder
Thomas Sibomana: Michael Anthony Williams

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**CREATIVE TEAM:**
Director: Derek Goldman  
Choreographer: Vincent Thomas  
Set Designer: Luciana Stecconi  
Lighting Designer: Harold F. Burgess II  
Costume Designer: Ivania Stack  
Properties Designer Michelle Elwyn  
Sound Designer Christopher Baine  
Projections Designer: Jared Mezzocchi  
Dialect Coach: Kim James Bey  
Fight Choreographer: Paul Gallagher  
Technical Director: Michael Redman  
Production Stage Manager: Kate Kilbane

**Plan Your Visit:**

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Unexplored Interior* are $10-$60, plus applicable fees. For information on savings programs such as student discounts, neighborhood nights, community nights, military and first responder discounts, and others, visit mosaictheater.org/tickets. **Tickets may be purchased online at mosaictheater.org, or by phone at 202-399-7993, or at the Atlas Performing Arts Center Box Office at 1333 H Street NE, Washington DC 20002.**

Atlas Performing Arts Center Box Office: 202-399-7993 ext. 2

**PRICING TIERS:**
General: $40-60  
Senior: 10% discount  
**Military and first responder:** 10% discount  
Under 30 and student: $15 tickets  
**Neighborhood Night:** $15 tickets on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sunday nights for Mosaic Theater neighbors in Northeast or Southeast.  
**Community Conversation:** $10 tickets once a month for Mosaic Theater neighbors in Northeast or Southeast.

**PERFORMANCE DATES:**
Preview performances at 8:00 PM on Thursday, 10/29, Friday 10/30, Saturday 10/31, and Sunday 11/1  
Sundays at 4 PM  
Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays at 7:30 PM  
Fridays & Saturdays at 8:00 PM  
Saturdays at 3:00 PM  
Weekday matinee at 11:00 AM on Thursday 11/19  
Closing performance at 7:00 PM on Sunday 11/29  
Full calendar: mosaictheater.org/unexplored-interior

**METRO:** Mosaic Theater Company is in residence at the Atlas Performing Arts Center, which is a twenty-minute walk from the Union Station Metro Station (Red Line). When exiting the station, follow signs to the bus parking garage. Exit the back of the garage and turn right onto H Street.

If coming by the Metro Center or Chinatown Metro Stations, patrons can catch the X2 or X9 busses, getting off at H St & 14th St NE.

Additional directions: mosaictheater.org/plan-your-trip.

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PARKING: Mosaic Theater Company has partnered with the Atlas and H Street Parking to provide valet parking throughout the season for nearly every performance. Patrons can pre-purchase valet parking for $18, which can either be used at the nearby valet drop-off, or as a self-parking voucher at the lot at 1008 H Street NE.

For more information, or to purchase valet parking: mosaictheater.org/parking.

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.

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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Meet Mosaic:
MosaicTheater.org
Facebook: facebook.com/MosaicTheater
Twitter: twitter.com/Mosaic_Theater
Blog: mosaictheater.org/Blog

Opening Nights for Mosaic Theater Company of DC’s inaugural 2015-16 season:
Unexplored Interior: Monday, November 2nd at 7:30 PM
The Gospel of Lovingkindness: Sunday, December 13th at 7:30 PM
Wrestling Jerusalem: Thursday, January 7th at 8:00 PM
I Shall Not Hate: Monday, January 25th at 7:30 PM
The Promised Land: Thursday, February 18th at 8:00 PM (at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company)
After the War: Monday, March 28th at 7:30 PM
Hkeelee (Talk to Me): Saturday, April 30th at 8:00 PM (at Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater)
When January Feels Like Summer: Monday, May 23rd at 7:30 PM