Mosaic Theater Company Media Release
Ari Roth, Founding Artistic Director • Serge Seiden, Managing Director & Producer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THREE-PART “CLAMOROUS ENCOUNTERS” SERIES ABOUT COMING OF AGE IN AMERICA LAUNCHES DC PREMIERE OF OBIE AWARD-WINNING MILK LIKE SUGAR ALONG WITH NEW ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES

Staged by Mosaic Theater Resident Director Jennifer L. Nelson, Kirsten Greenidge’s Milk Like Sugar is a buoyant coming of age story about young women overcoming pressures of race, class, and acceptance.

Mosaic Theater Company announces Accessibility and Inclusion Initiative, made possible in part by the Weissberg Foundation’s 2016-2019 Fund for Diversity in Theater

Milk Like Sugar Discussion Panels announced: “Compelling Dilemmas: Empowerment and Impediments” featuring Dr. Joyce Ladner, civil rights leader and former Interim President of Howard University

Workshop Series continues with QUID PRO QUO at the Atlas Performing Arts Center and Gallaudet University

November 2 - 27, 2016

(Washington, DC) Hot on the heels of the record-breaking, critically hailed Satchmo at the Waldorf, Mosaic Theater Company of DC’s Season Two continues with Kirsten Greenidge’s riotous, Obie Award-winning MILK LIKE SUGAR (November 2 - 27, 2016), under the direction of Mosaic Theater’s Jennifer L. Nelson (The Gospel of Lovingkindness). The play, Mosaic’s second DC premiere this season, is a rousing story about young women coming of age in a time when issues of acceptance, mentorship, and materialism challenge the dreams and ambitious of so many teens. It is the first of three plays in Mosaic’s 2016-17 season to highlight issues affecting young urban teens and millennials, to be followed by the DC premiere of Philip Dawkins’ intergenerational LGBTQ comedy Charm, and the world premiere of Tearrance Arvelle Chisholm’s Hooded: Or Being Black for Dummies.

Milk Like Sugar offers an arresting and utterly contemporary look at the pressures facing young women in American high schools. The play follows 16-year-old Annie (Kashayna Johnson), a driven but soft-spoken student whose dreams of college are challenged when one of her friends announces that she’s pregnant. Suddenly the prospect of matching diaper bags, friendship, and adult independence begins to look like an escape from an adolescence largely deprived of agency and mentorship.

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at the Atlas Performing Arts Center • 1333 H St NE Washington, DC 20002 • www.mosaictheater.org
“We are eager for what’s about to be unleashed; an energy that should feel wholly new for us,” says Founding Artistic Director Ari Roth. "I can’t wait for our audiences to experience this play just as I inhaled it on the first read—breathlessly, with a great deal of lightness and exhilaration, lifting text off the page, even with challenging subject matter anchoring the play in the very real world. The marvelous young women in Milk Like Sugar are propelled by hormones and dreams and their own hard-scrabble pragmatism—tempered by self-deception, vulnerability, and a lack of confidence masked by supreme confidence. As we embrace this play, we accept it for all its power to provoke, as it simultaneously revs up the heart and trips the sensitivity barometer. Thank God for our playwright’s propensity for provocation, and her deft ability to prick up the ear.”

The cast is anchored by a quartet of young women actors—Johnson’s Annie, as well as Ghislaine Dwarka (Margie), Renee Elizabeth Wilson (Talisha), and Tyasia Velines (Keera). Mosaic Theater audiences will recognize Helen Hayes Award winner Deidra LaWan Starnes (playing Annie’s mother Myrna), from her acclaimed performance in The Gospel of Lovingkindness (also directed by Nelson), as well as the play’s male actors, Jeremy Keith Hunter (Antwoine) and Helen Hayes Award winner Vaughn Ryan Midder (Malik), from their richly memorable roles in When January Feels Like Summer.

“What first drew me to Milk Like Sugar was the playwright, Kirsten Greenidge,” shares director Jennifer L. Nelson. “In this play, she gives us a topical story of four teenaged girls who, in seeking meaning and purpose to their lives, make a startling pact. We don’t often have the occasion to see into the inner lives of teenagers. But Greenidge gives us a creative, empathetic opportunity to see beyond stereotypes with empathy and hope.”

Inspired by the 2008 teen pregnancy controversy at Gloucester High School in Massachusetts, Milk Like Sugar was commissioned by La Jolla Playhouse and Theater Masters, in association with Playwrights Horizons and Women’s Project Productions. It premiered at La Jolla in 2011, before transferring Off-Broadway to Peter Jay Sharp Theater later that year. In addition to the 2012 Obie Award for playwriting, Milk Like Sugar received the 2011 Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award, and the 2011 San Diego Critics Circle Craig Noel award for Outstanding New Play.

This production is a DC premiere, not only for Milk Like Sugar but also for Kirsten Greenidge—who, despite an earlier residency at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company and an extensive production history around the country, has yet to receive a full staging of her work in Washington, DC.

Mosaic Theater Company Announces Accessibility and Inclusion Initiative, made possible in part by the Weissberg Foundation’s 2016-2019 Fund for Diversity in Theater

Mosaic Theater Company is deeply committed to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA). During its Inaugural Season, Mosaic Theater and neighboring Gallaudet University established an early partnership to create an annual apprentice position for a Gallaudet student or alumnus/a, and to further the reading, development, and production of plays by Deaf playwrights. This artistic and operational partnership was conceived in close collaboration with Gallaudet apprentice Kala Granger.

This season Mosaic’s expanded Accessibility Initiative ensures that all eight productions in Mosaic Theater’s second season will be accessible to the Deaf community. Three shows will have select Open Captioned performances; three shows will have select ASL-interpreted performances and post-show conversations; and two productions, Milk Like Sugar and Hooded: Or Being Black for Dummies will be fully accessible at EVERY PERFORMANCE via surtitles incorporated into the direction and design.

The Accessibility Initiative is made possible in part by a three year, $195,000 grant from the Weissberg Foundation, as part of their 2016-2019 Fund for Diversity in Theater—a $1,000,000 commitment to engage and expand new voices and audiences in DC-area theaters.

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Milk Like Sugar will further Mosaic Theater’s commitment to free and expansive community programming with a discussion series titled “Compelling Dilemmas: Empowerment and Impediments” dedicated to investigating the ways that young people are supported and failed by current educational structures; to exploring innovative mentorship initiatives; and to deconstructing entrenched stereotypes around teenage pregnancy. The series will feature a keynote session with Dr. Joyce Ladner (former Interim President of Howard University), as well as Jonathan M. Burns (Board Member, 100 Black Men of Greater Washington, DC), Nadia Gold-Moritz (Executive Director, Young Women’s Project), Sandy Hassan (quilter), Abigail Hill (social worker for Healthy Generations Program), Kelley E. Navies (oral historian, librarian, writer, and cultural heritage specialist), Serra Sippel (President, Center for Health and Gender Equality), and many others.

Workshop Series continues with QUID PRO QUO at the Atlas Performing Arts Center and Gallaudet University

Mosaic’s partnership with Gallaudet University also includes an artistic collaboration around the second installment in Mosaic Theater’s 2016–17 workshop series, QUID PRO QUO, a provocative new play by Deaf writer and performer Garret Zuercher (Steppenwolf’s Tribes), directed by James Caverly (Studio Theatre’s Tribes). The workshop will include one staging on November 14 at the Atlas Performing Arts Center, on the set of Milk Like Sugar, and one staging on November 20 at Gallaudet University. The show will be performed in ASL and spoken English. Later in Season Two, Gallaudet Theater Department Chair Ethan Sinnott will design the set for Hooded: Or Being Black for Dummies.

The Workshop Series and Mosaic’s signature public programming are part of The Reva and David Logan Community Engagement Initiative, and reflect a ‘mosaic’ that continues to expand in ambition, inclusion, and radical hospitality.

Kirsten Greenidge (Playwright)s work shines a strong light on the intersection of race and class in America, and she enjoys the challenge of placing underrepresented voices on stage. In May 2012, Kirsten received an Obie for her play Milk Like Sugar which was first commissioned by La Jolla Playhouse and Theater Masters, and then produced at La Jolla and then Playwright’s Horizons as a coproduction with Women’s Theater Project. Milk Like Sugar was also awarded a TCG Edgerton grant as well as a San Diego Critics Award. Boston audiences might be familiar with Kirsten’s latest play, The Luck of the Irish, which was presented at the Huntington Theater Company in the spring of 2012 and enjoyed a warm reception and extended run. A former NEA/TCG playwright in residence at Woolly Mammoth, previous work includes several Boston Theater Marathon pieces, Bossa Nova (Yale Rep, 2010 and also an Edgerton New Play Award recipient), Thanksgiving in Company One’s Grimm (2010), Rust (The Magic Theater, 2007), 103 Within the Veil (Company One, 2005), and Sans Culottes in the Promised Land (Humana, 2004). She has enjoyed development experiences at Sundance, Sundance at UCross, the O’Neil, Pacific Playwrights Festival (South Coast Rep), and Bay Area Playwrights Festival. Kirsten was the inaugural fellowship for Page 73’s playwriting fellowship program. Current projects include commissions from CompanyOne, Yale Rep, Denver Center Theater, The Goodman, La Jolla Playhouse, Baltimore Center Stage, and Emerson Stage, where she and director Melia Bensussen will adapt the Pulitzer Prize-winning book, Common Ground. Early in her career, Kirsten was a recipient of the Lorraine Hansberry Award and the Mark David Cohen Award by the Kennedy Center’s American College Theater Festival. She attended Wesleyan University and The Playwrights Workshop at the University of Iowa. She is an Assistant Professor of Theater at Boston University’s Center for Fine Art as well as being a resident playwright at New Dramatists, and she is a member of Boston’s Rhombus writing group.

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Three part “Clamorous Encounters” series launches Obie Award-winning Milk Like Sugar—Page 4

Jennifer L. Nelson (Director) is a Washington-based theater professional committed to principles that value human dignity, justice, and compassion. She brings to Mosaic Theater more than 40 years of experience as an actor, playwright, administrator, professor, director, and two-term president of the League of Washington Theatres. She is the senior advisor for special programming at Ford’s Theatre, and previously served for 11 years as the producing artistic director of the African Continuum Theatre Company, where she directed more than 20 full productions and readings. She is a 26-year veteran of Living Stage Theatre Company, the former community outreach program at Arena Stage. Nelson has directed productions at Ford’s Theatre, Round House, Woolly Mammoth, Theater of the First Amendment, Theater J, and more. As a playwright, Nelson won the Helen Hayes/Charles MacArthur Award for Most Outstanding New Play for her play, Torn from the Headlines. She has taught at UCLA, George Washington University, and American University, most recently teaching “Theatre for Social Change” as an adjunct lecturer at Georgetown University. Last season she directed The Gospel of Lovingkindness at Mosaic Theater.

The creative team for Milk Like Sugar includes set designer Luciana Stecconi, lighting designer Dan Covey, sound designer David Lamont Wilson, projections designer Gregory Towle, costume designer Marci Rodgers, properties designer Deb Thomas, technical director William M. Woodard, and stage manager Hope Villanueva.

For full company bios and additional production information visit mosaictheater.org/milk.

Full company information is included below.

Milk Like Sugar Opening Night:
Sunday, November 6 at 7:30 PM

Production Information
Milk Like Sugar
By Kirsten Greenidge
Directed by Jennifer L. Nelson
November 2-27, 2016

ABOUT: For sixteen year-old Annie, high school is a blur of text messaging and college a tantalizing dream around the corner. But when one of her friends announces she's expecting, the search for friendship, acceptance, and matching Coach diaper bags draws Annie into a life-altering 'pact' that thrusts her into the tough choices of adulthood.

Mosaic Theater Resident Director Jennifer L. Nelson (The Gospel of Lovingkindness) directs this riotous tale by Kristen Greenidge about powerful young women on the brink of maturity that “balances street with sweet, to entertaining and illuminating effect” (Los Angeles Times). Winner of the 2012 Obie Award for Playwriting and 2011 San Diego Critics Circle Craig Noel Award for Outstanding New Play.

CAST:
Margie: Ghislaine Dwarka
Antwoine: Jeremy Keith Hunter
Annie: Kashayna Johnson
Malik: Vaughn Ryan Midder
Myrna: Diedra LaWan Starnes
Keera: Tyasia Velines
Talisha: Renee Elizabeth Wilson

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Three part “Clamorous Encounters” series launches Obie Award-winning *Milk Like Sugar*—Page 5

**CREATIVE TEAM:**

Author: Kirsten Greenidge  
Director: Jennifer L. Nelson  
Set Designer: Luciana Stecconi  
Lighting Designer: Dan Covey  
Sound Designer: David Lamont Wilson  
Projections Designer: Gregory Towle  
Costumes Designer: Marci Rodgers  
Properties Designer: Deb Thomas  
Technical Director: William M. Woodard  
Stage Manager: Hope Villanueva

**Plan Your Visit:**

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Milk Like Sugar* are $40-$60, plus applicable fees. For information on savings programs such as student discounts, neighborhood 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 ext. 2, 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 tickets  
**NE & SE Neighbors:** $30 tickets  
Under 30 and student: $20 tickets  
**Senior:** 10% discount  
Military and first responder: 10% discount  
**TodayTix Daily Mobile Rush:** $12 tickets

**PERFORMANCE DATES:**

Preview performances at 8PM Wednesday 11/2 (Pay-What-You-Can), Thursday 11/3, Friday 11/4, and Saturday 11/5, and at 3PM Sunday 11/6  
Opening night at 7:30PM on Sunday 11/6  
Thursdays and Fridays at 8PM  
Saturdays at 3PM and 8PM  
Sundays at 3PM and 7:30PM  
Monday 11/21 at 8PM  
Tuesday 11/22 at 8PM  
Student matinee at 11AM on Thursday 11/10  
Closing performance at 3PM on Sunday 11/27  
Full calendar: mosaictheater.org/milk

**DC STREETCAR:** Mosaic Theater Company performs at the Atlas Performing Arts Center, 1.2 miles from DC’s Union Station. Patrons arriving at the Union Station Metro Station (Red Line) can catch the new DC Streetcar by exiting the station, and following the signs to the bus-level parking garage. Exit the back of the garage and turn right onto H Street, where the Eastbound Streetcar can be caught in the middle of the bridge. The DC Streetcar is free, and operates seven days a week.

**AUTOMATED PARKING GARAGE:** Patrons are encouraged to make use of a new, automated parking garage located at 625 H St NE, open 24/7. The garage is credit card-only. Pricing is $12 flat on weekends, and

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$12 per two hours on weekdays (weekday max is $18). The garage is located one block away from the free DC Streetcar stop at 8th & H St NE.

**VALET PARKING:** Mosaic Theater Company has partnered with the Atlas and H Street Parking to provide valet parking throughout the season for nearly every performance (Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sunday matinees). Patrons can pre-purchase valet parking for $20, 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. Mosaic 2016-17 season subscribers can purchase discounted valet parking for $15.

**METRO AND METROBUS:** 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.

For more information, or for additional directions: [mosaictheater.org/getting-here](http://mosaictheater.org/getting-here).

Mosaic 8, First 8, and Mosaic Workshop 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](http://mosaictheater.org).

*Independent, intercultural, entertaining and uncensored,* Mosaic Theater Company is committed to making transformational, socially-relevant art, producing plays by authors on the front lines of conflict zones, 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.

We complement our productions with comprehensive engagement through free pre- and post-show programming, an annual intercultural festival, like our “Voices From a Changing Middle East” series, and educational initiatives, including our touring “Mosaic on the Move.” We strive to foster a culture of listening and welcoming, embracing complexity and a multi-focal perspective. Our plays speak truth to power and to the private parts of our soul. In short, we make art with a purpose and strive for impact.

**Opening Nights for Mosaic Theater Company of DC’s second season:**

*Satchmo at the Waldorf:* Monday, August 29 at 7:30 PM
*Milk Like Sugar:* Sunday, November 6 at 7:30 PM
*Charm:* Sunday, January 8 at 7:30 PM
*Hooded: Or Being Black for Dummies:* Monday, January 30 at 7:30 PM
*Blood Knot:* Sunday, April 2 at 7:30 PM
*A Human Being Died That Night:* Sunday, April 9 at 7:30 PM
*Ulysses on Bottles:* Monday, May 22 at 7:30 PM
*The Return:* Monday, June 12 at 7:30 PM

Meet Mosaic
Website: MosaicTheater.org
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