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Opening Night: Thursday, February 18 at 8:00 PM

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MOSAIC THEATER COMPANY OF DC’S VOICES FROM A CHANGING MIDDLE EAST FESTIVAL CONTINUES WITH DRAMA OF EAST AFRICAN REFUGEES SEEKING ASYLUM IN ISRAEL
THE PROMISED LAND (ERETZ CHADASHA)
RUNNING FEBRUARY 16-28 AT WOOLLY MAMMOTH THEATRE COMPANY

Poignant story of migrant refugees plays at the midpoint of Mosaic’s Middle East Festival, underscoring one of the most urgent conflicts affecting our world today.

(Washington, DC) Mosaic Theater Company of DC announces the third installment in the deeply relevant Voices From a Changing Middle East Festival, which continues this month with a story of international migration—a topic all-too-familiar after the devastating conflict in Syria has left nearly five million refugees displaced across the Middle East and Europe. The Promised Land (Eretz Chadasha) co-written by Israeli dramatists Shachar Pinkas and Shay Pitovsky and directed by Michael Bloom (Off-Broadway’s Sight Unseen), follows a group of Sudanese and Eritrean refugees crossing the Sinai desert into Israel, testing the capacity of a democratic society to embrace those most in need.

"With The Promised Land, we return to a powerful motif that opened our inaugural season,” shares Founding Artistic Director Ari Roth, “which saw us looking at Rwanda, coming to grips with the origins of a genocide that unfolded before our eyes. Now twenty-two years later, we’re seeing an epic tragedy unfold before our eyes on a global scale with the international humanitarian crisis in Europe, triggered most recently by the decimating civil war in Syria.

“But before Syria,” Roth continues, “there was and remains Sudan, and Eritrea, where millions of refugees have fled civil war and, among them are 60,000 who have crossed the desert into Israel where they await an unkind and uncertain fate.”

This kaleidoscopic and documentary-infused play was first produced at Habimah Theater (Israel’s national theater) with an all-Israeli cast comprised of its younger (second) professional ensemble. This new American staging incorporates a diverse cast of locally-based DC actors, underscoring not only the world’s shared obligation to care for those displaced by war or violence, but also the diverse landscape of refugee populations scattered across the globe.

“Why focus on 50,000 in a country of 7 million when there are tens of millions of displaced persons worldwide?” asks director Michael Bloom. “The Africans in Israel represent the unique situation of having —continued—
no legal standing in a country founded by refugees that was one of the first signatories to the United Nations Convention of refugees in 1951. And, because Judaism teaches a tolerance and sympathy toward the stranger; the outsider.”

This ensemble cast is led by DC actors Audrey Bertaux (G-D’s Honest Truth), Aaron Blien (Yentl), Felipe Cabezas (The Two Gentlemen of Verona), Gary-Kayi Fletcher (Ruined), Awa Sal Secka (Silence! The Musical), Brayden Simpson (Fences), and Kathryn Tkel (The Guard), fusing the lives of refugees with the true accounts of their own family origins to tell a story at once foreign and familiar.

Mosaic Theater will continue to offer curated post-show discussions after nearly every performance in the Middle East Festival, which have so far featured a wide range of experts, community leaders, faith leaders, activists, politicians, and artists. Confirmed participants in post-show discussions for The Promised Land include Joel Braunold, Executive Director of the Alliance for Middle East Peace, the New Israel Fund, poet Safia Elhillo with Al Mutanabbi Street Starts Here DC in conjunction with the Split this Rock poetry initiative, and Epicenter founder and director John Feffer.

Shachar Pinkas (Playwright) studied directing at Faculty of Arts, Tel-Aviv University, and currently works as a dramaturg for Habima Theater. Her plays include: The Promised Land (co-written with Shay Pitovsky, Habimah Theater of Israel), Meat-ladies and Gentleman (Herzeliya Ensemble theatre), Purseus and Medusa (Haifa University Theatre), Walk(wo)man (interactive play for Akko Festival for Alternative Theatre), Movement (Tel-Aviv University Theatre).

Shay Pitovsky (Playwright) most recently adapted and directed for the stage the American premiere of Izzeldin Abuelaish's memoir, I Shall Not Hate, produced by Mosaic Theater and by Habimah Theater in Israel before that. Currently he is serving as Artistic Director of the Elad Theater of Eilat and the Arava, and from 2008-2015 was Artistic Director of the Young Habimah Company. He is an alumnus of the Dramatic Arts School of Seminar Hakibbutzim (directors division), and of the School for Drama Writing. Projects at Habimah Theater include: Ten Minutes from Home (after the 20th anniversary of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin), The Promised Land and God Waits at the Station (both international projects by the UTE), The Nose by Gogol, Monsieur de Pourceaugnac by Moliere, and The Oath (based on a Jewish tale). At Haifa Theater: The adventures of a donkey that is all pure (based on a children's book by Nachum Gutman). Fringe Festival projects include: The Breakdown by Durrenmatt (Winning Best Show of the Year, Best Director, and Best Costumes), Beatrice (based on a short story by Nahum Guttmann) and Drawers (a dance-theater performance).

Michael Bloom (Director) is former artistic director of the Cleveland Play House (2004-13) and an award-winning director. Now a resident of the DC area, he most recently directed Arthur Miller's The Price at Olney Theatre Center. Off-Broadway he directed the NY premiere of Sight Unseen at Manhattan Theatre Club, (Drama Desk nomination). His regional work includes Gross Indecency (Elliot Norton Award, Best production) at Huntington Theatre Company and Dinner with Friends at the Humana Festival at Actors Theatre of Louisville. He has also directed at Williamstown Theatre Festival, South Coast Rep, Berkeley Rep, Old Globe Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Kansas City Rep, Milwaukee Rep, Geffen Playhouse, Paper Mill Playhouse, and Seattle Rep. In Tokyo he directed The Glass Menagerie and The Miracle Worker. He has taught at Harvard/ART, UCLA, NYU, and University of Texas, Austin. Mr. Bloom has written Jane Austen’s Emma (Samuel French), Christmas Freud, and Thinking Like a Director (Faber & Faber), as well as articles in American Theatre Magazine and the New York Times.

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Mosaic Theater announces third installment in Middle East Festival, *The Promised Land* —Page 3

The creative team for *The Promised Land* includes set and lighting designer Andrew Cissna, costume designer Marci Rodgers, composer and sound designer Eric Shimelonis, properties designer Katherine Fleshman, dramaturg Joan Cummins, dialect coach Courtney Ferguson, production manager Kevin Faragher, technical director Hunter Montgomery, and production stage manager and light board operator Keri Schultz.

For full company bios and additional production information visit mosaictheater.org/the-promised-land. Full company information is included below.

Post show discussions will follow nearly every performance of *The Promised Land*. Check mosaictheater.org/voices-festival-events for regular updates.

Next up for the Festival is playwright Motti Lerner’s explosive new drama *After the War*, directed by Sinai Peter (*Return to Haifa, Pangs of the Messiah*) in the Lang Theatre from March 24-April 17, 2016. This new play, from the author of the controversial *The Admission*, chronicles one Israeli family’s traumatic fallout after the 2006 war in Lebanon. The Festival concludes with Leila Buck’s poignant solo show *Hkeelee (Talk to Me)*, a probing portrait of a woman reconciling with the memory of her grandmother and her own American-Lebanese identity. Directed by Shana Gold, this limited three-performance run takes place in the 200-seat Kogod Cradle at Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater on April 30 and May 1, 2016. (Forthcoming press releases will offer casting, programming updates and key bios for later offerings in the Festival.)

*The Promised Land* Opening Night:
Thursday, February 18th at 8:00 PM
Mosaic Theater Company staff, board, and affiliated artists celebrate the opening night of *The Promised Land*. For further information, or for tickets, contact Chase Meacham at 202-399-7993 ext 155, or email chase@mosaictheater.org.

**Production Information**

*The Promised Land*
Written by Shachar Pinkas and Shay Pitovsky
Directed by Michael Bloom
At the Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, February 16-28, 2016
On tour at area universities, February 29-March 6, 2016

**ABOUT:** The youth ensemble of Habimah, Israel’s national theater, created this documentary-infused kaleidoscope chronicling the waves of Sudanese refugees who crossed the desert to enter Israel legally and illegally, finding themselves stranded in a drama of relocation and displacement. Adapted for an American troupe and staged by the former artistic director of the Cleveland Play House, Michael Bloom (Off-Broadway’s *Sight Unseen*), this story personalizes a history of immigration and asks pointed questions about race and the limits of empathy in a welcoming society. Part of the Voices From a Changing Middle East Festival, this production will take place in Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company’s 100-seat Rehearsal Hall.

**CAST:**
Audrey Bertaux
Mosaic Theater announces third installment in Middle East Festival, *The Promised Land* — Page 4

Aaron Bliden  
Felipe Cabezas  
Gary-Kayi Fletcher  
Awa Sal Secka  
Brayden Simpson  
Kathryn Tkel

**CREATIVE TEAM:**  
Director: Michael Bloom  
Set and lighting designer: Andrew Cissna  
Costume designer: Marci Rodgers  
Composer and sound designer: Eric Shimelonis  
Properties designer: Katherine Fleshman  
Dramaturg: Joan Cummins  
Dialect coach: Courtney Ferguson  
Production manager: Kevin Faragher  
Technical director: Hunter Montgomery  
Production stage manager and light board operator: Keri Schultz

**Plan Your Visit:**  
**TICKETS:** Tickets for *The Promised Land* are $20-$50, 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:** $20-$50  
**Senior:** 10% discount  
**Military and first responder:** 10% discount  
**Under 30 and student:** $20 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:**  
Pay-What-You-Can preview performance at 8:00 PM on Tuesday, 2/16  
Preview performance at 8:00 PM on Wednesday, 2/17  
Opening night at 8:00 PM on Thursday, 2/18  
Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays at 8:00 PM  
Student matinee at 11:00 AM on Friday 2/26  
Saturday 2/20 at 2:30 PM and 8:00 PM

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Mosaic Theater announces third installment in Middle East Festival, *The Promised Land* —Page 5

Saturday 2/27 at 3:00 PM and 8:00 PM  
Sunday 2/21 at 1:30 PM and 7:00 PM  
Closing performance at 2:00 PM on Sunday, 2/28  
Full calendar: mosaictheater.org/the-promised-land

**METRO:** *The Promised Land* is taking place at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, located near the Archives station on the Yellow and Green lines, and near the Gallery Place-Chinatown station on the Red, Yellow, and Green lines.

Additional directions to Woolly Mammoth, as well as street parking and parking lot instructions can be found at: woollymammoth.net/visit/directions-parking-2.

**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.

### 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:** Sunday, May 22nd at 7:30 PM

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