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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Press/Opening Night: Sunday, January 8 at 7:30 PM

January 7, 2017

MOSAIC THEATER EXPANDS COMMUNITY INITIATIVES DURING RUN OF CHARM TO SUPPORT LOCAL TRANS AND GENDER NONCONFORMING ARTISTS

Partnership with local artists Lady Dane Figueroa Edidi and Venus Selenite makes possible Local Voices Bookstore to celebrate the work of local trans and gender nonconforming artists of color.

(Washington, DC) Mosaic Theater Company of DC expands its community engagement initiatives with new undertaking to celebrate the work of local transgender authors of color, in support of trans activist and educator Gloria Allen, whose work inspired CHARM.

Mosaic is partnering with local trans artists Lady Dane Figueroa Edidi and Venus Selenite to establish the Local Voices Bookstore in the Atlas Performing Arts Center lobby during the January run of Charm and continuing in February through the run of Hooded, Or Being Black for Dummies. The store, which will continue as a virtual online catalogue hosted by Mosaic, will feature works by local trans writers of color. All proceeds will go to support Mama Gloria Allen’s ongoing work in Chicago, which inspired Northlight Theatre to commission Charm in 2012. In addition to Edidi and Selenite, the Local Voices Bookstore will feature works by trans authors Ryka Aoki, Oliver Baez Bendorf, Mykell Hatcher-McLarin, Andrea Jenkins, Kokumo, and Kay Ulanday Barrett.

“Art and advocacy have always existed side by side,” share Edidi and Selenite in the mission statement for the Local Voices Bookstore. “Theater has the great responsibility and deepest potential to be at the forefront of social change and collective liberation. For as long as there has been art, there have been trans and gender non-conforming artists of color (TGNC). Holding true to a mission to make our theater a space centered on inclusion on and off the stage, Mosaic Theater Company thrillingly partners with local trans artists to answer what can happen when we take active roles in activating the power of theater as change agents.”

Mosaic Founding Artistic Director Ari Roth credits Edidi and Selenite for their constructive engagement with the theater in “alerting our community to the powerful array of work coming from local trans artists, and trans artists of color, in particular. Dane and Venus have generously curated a roster of noted artists and our bookstore celebrates that vital work, shares Roth. “This is just the beginning of expanding our awareness of the talent pool that’s creating notable work right here alongside us.”

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The mission statement continues: “The Local Voices Bookstore centers the voices of trans authors of color, and builds upon the blueprint of cultivating Creative Equity for transgender non-conforming artists of color.”

Bios for Featured Local Voices Authors

LADY DANE FIGUEROA EDIDI
Considered DC’s most prolific Trans Artist and dubbed “The Ancient Jazz Priestess of Mother Africa”, Lady Dane Figueroa Edidi is a Nigerian, Cuban, Indigenous, American Performance Artist, Author (Yemaya’s Daughters, Brew, Baltimore: A Love Letter, Wither, Remains: A Gathering of Bones, Keeper, and Bone), Teacher, Choreographer, Oracular Consultant, Priestess, and Advocate. A Founding Member of Force Collision Theater Company, Curator of La Ti Do’s annual Celebration of Trans Artist and Capturing Fire’s Alchemy, Trans Women of Color Collective’s Director of Global Initiatives. She is the first openly Trans woman to be nominated for Helen Hayes Award (2016), the first Trans Woman of Color in DC to publish a work of Fiction in DC, as well as the first TWOC Playwright to be chosen for Theater Alliance’s Hothouse Festival, having her play Absalom read at the Kenney Center’s Prelude Festival. From Baltimore, Maryland, and growing up singing jazz, she has been utilizing art as a tool for healing, revolution, and liberation since she was a child. While performing at several notable theaters, she works to create new pathways for other trans and GNC Artist/Creatives of Color, originating the role of Vaudeville Queen and artistic ancestor Cordelia Mcclain in Erik Ehn’s Shape at La Mama in New York. A Healer-Historian who focuses on the positionality of Trans, and GNC people within ancestor cultures, she has brought a message of collective liberation and healing all across the country. For more information on Lady Dane or to book her go to LadyDaneFE.com

VENUS SELENITE
Venus Selenite is a poet and multidisciplinary cultural worker based in Washington, DC. Her first book, trigger, made her the first Black trans woman from Louisiana to publish a full-length work of poetry. Selenite has performed at the Kennedy Center, the White House, Princeton University, and is an annual feature at the Capturing Fire Queer Poetry Slam. A native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, she has also written for The Tempest and Wear Your Voice Magazine. For more information, visit venusselenite.com and/or follow her on Twitter: @venusselenite.

OLIVER BAEZ BENDORF
Oliver Baez Bendorf is a queer poet, cartoonist, teacher, and librarian. His first poetry collection, The Spectral Wilderness, was selected by Mark Doty for the Wick Poetry Prize and published by Kent State University Press in 2015. Bendorf’s work has also appeared in Alaska Quarterly Review, Blackbird, Indiana Review, The Rumpus, Transgender Studies Quarterly, and Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics. He has received poetry fellowships from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Lambda Literary Foundation, and Vermont Studio Center. Baez Bendorf is also a cartoonist, librarian, teaching artist, and activist. His teaching work with marginalized communities has been supported with funding from Poets & Writers, and his activist work on #PulseOrlandoSyllabus and Orlando Flyers was covered by news outlets such as Chronicle of Higher Ed, Ploughshares, Slate, and WLRN Miami. He is an alum of the University of Iowa and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he earned an MFA in Poetry and an MA in Library and Information Studies.

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MYKELL HATCHER-MCLARIN
Mykell Hatcher-McLarin is the Peer Support Specialist, Community Dialogue Organizer, and Youth Advocate for Black Transmen, Inc - MD/DC Chapter, and Representative for Black Trans Advocacy. Through his advocacy and collective building he aims to expand space for trans people, especially transmasculine people of color, to be seen and live in their truth in healthy and growing ways. His ultimate goal is to use therapeutic strategies, such as poetry, to assist in the alleviation of doubt, stress, and feelings of worthlessness and isolation within the community so to foster the best quality of life for all walks of transient life.

ANDREA JENKINS
Andrea Jenkins, educator, poet, artist, and activist, works as the Oral Historian for Transgender Oral History Project for the University of Minnesota. She is the author of three books: Tributaries: Poems Celebrating Black History and Pieces of A Scream, and her latest title, The T is Not Silent: New and Selected, Purple Lioness Productions, 2015. Andrea has received many fellowships and awards, including, a Bush Fellowship, the Many Voices Fellowship at the Playwrights’ Center, The Cultural Community Leadership Institute Fellowship through Intermedia Arts and a Givens Foundation Fellowship for Black Writers. Her work has been collected in several anthologies including A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota MHSP, 2016, and Blues Vision: African American Writing in Minnesota, MHSP, 2016. In 2015 Andrea was named Grand Marshall of the Twin Cities Pride Parade.

KAY ULANDAY BARRETT
A Campus Pride Hot List artist, Trans Justice Funding Project Panelist, and Trans 100 Honoree, Kay Ulanday Barrett is a poet, performer, cultural worker & strategist, and snack eater galore who navigates life as a disabled pin@y-amerikan transgender queer in the U.S. with struggle, resistance, and laughter. Kay has been featured at colleges and on stages globally: Princeton University, UC Berkeley, Musee Pour Rire in Montreal, The Guild Complex, Brooklyn Museum, and The Chicago Historical Society. Kay’s bold work continues to excite and challenge audiences. A seasoned speaker, Kay has facilitated workshops, presented keynotes, and contributed to panels with various social justice communities. Kay’s ideas have featured in PBS News Hour, OUT, The Advocate, Buzzfeed, Huffington Post, KPFA Radio, and WBAI Radio.

As a fellow of both The Home School and Drunken Boat Literary Retreat, awards include: 18 Million Rising Filipino American History Month Hero, Chicago’s LGBTQ 30 under 30 awards, Finalist for The Gwendolyn Brooks Open-Mic Award, Windy City Times Pride Literary Poetry Prize. Their contributions are found in Poor Magazine, Trans Bodies/Trans Selves, Windy City Queer: Dispatches from the Third Coast, Margins, Make/Shift, Filipino American Psychology, Asian Americans For Progress, The Advocate, Fusion.net, and Bitch Magazine. Kay turns art into action and is dedicated to remixing recipes. See their online wobble on twitter/tumblr/instagram as brownroundboi and on his website, kaybarrett.net

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NEXT AT MOSAIC THEATER COMPANY:

Charm
By Philip Dawkins I Directed by Natsu Onoda Power I Associate Director, KenYatta Rogers
At the Atlas Performing Arts Center, Lang Theatre I January 5-29, 2017

Hooded, Or Being Black for Dummies
By Tearrance Arvelle Chisholm I Directed by Serge Seiden I Associate Director, Vaughn Ryan Midder
At the Atlas Performing Arts Center, Sprenger Theatre I January 25—February 19, 2017

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