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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Mosaic Theater Company’s Fourth Season Begins With Empowering Marie and Rosetta
Play with Songs Highlights the Talents of Rosetta Tharpe and Marie Knight, Two Under-
Appreciated Black Musical Legends

WASHINGTON, DC—“How Hope Happens,” the Fourth Season at Mosaic Theater Company, will open with Marie and Rosetta, written by George Brant and directed by local artist Sandra L. Holloway. This play featuring gospel music, blues, and rock n’ roll tells the story of the first rehearsal between Sister Rosetta Tharpe (recently inducted into the Rock n’ Roll Hall of Fame), and her young protégée Marie Knight.

“I’m very pleased and proud to be opening our Fourth Season with this empowering musical celebration of two extraordinary Black Women. Marie and Rosetta is full of repeated flights of joy and gospel jubilation, in which we transcend time to regard a momentous legacy,” said Ari Roth, Founding Artistic Director of Mosaic Theater Company. “Many people don’t realize that Rosetta Tharpe, a Black Queer Woman, essentially invented Rock and Roll music, and it is a true honor to be telling her story.”

The role of the vivacious legend that is Sister Rosetta Tharpe will be played by Roz White, a Helen Hayes Award winner for Bessie’s Blues at Studio Theatre and frequent star at MetroStage. The young and talented but more traditional Marie Knight will be played by Ayana Reed, who recently played Antigone in The Gospel of Colonus. Sandra L. Holloway, who recently directed the acclaimed remount of The Gospel at Colonus at WSC Avant Bard, will direct this project, with her frequent artistic partner e’Marcus Harper-Short (Black Nativity, Theatre Alliance) serving as Musical Director.

“I grew up in the same religious community as Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the Church of God in Christ, which deeply values music as a way to be moved by the Holy Spirit” said Harper-Short, “so I feel a very close connection to her music and her story. That religious tradition is in many ways the foundation on which gospel music is built, and it is why Rosetta’s playing was just so phenomenal. She would just go and go, and work up a sweat, and reach this nirvana of performance, and it allowed her to be the first artist from the Church of God in Christ to cross over to blues and other mainstream music. Both she and I have received negative responses from the Church because of our interest in other forms of artistic expression, and so I feel like I know her, I feel this kinship with her, and I can’t wait to invite the audience into her world.”
Marie and Rosetta premiered at the Off-Broadway Atlantic Theater Company in New York City in August 2016 under the direction of Neil Pepe. Since then, it has been produced at the Cincinnati Playhouse and Cleveland Play House. This production will be Marie and Rosetta’s DC premiere. The world of 1946 Mississippi will be brought to life by a top-notch design team, including set design by Andrew Cohen (The Crucible, Olney Theatre Center), lighting design by Jonathan Alexander (King Lear, WSC Avant Bard), costume design by Michael Murray, sound design by Gordon Nimmo-Smith (Caucasian Chalk Circle, Constellation Theatre Company), and props design by Tim Jones (The Last Night of Ballyhoo, Theater J).

Sixteen performances of Marie and Rosetta will be followed by robust post-show discussions. Topics will include conversations about gospel and blues music, the burdens of Jim Crow laws on Black entertainers, the relationship between Black churches and other performances venues, the sexual identity of Rosetta Tharpe, and the connections between Tharpe and DC (her third wedding was combined with a concert, and occurred at Griffith Stadium in the Shaw neighborhood.) Two of these post-show discussions will be led by local scholar and professor Gale Wald, whose book Shout, Sister, Shout: The Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe inspired many parts of Brant’s script.

“I was honored when Ari approached me about this project,” said director Sandra L. Holloway. “I’m very excited to be delving into the relationship between these two women in a way that allows us to see their remarkable spirit. There are just people in the world who are going to do what they came here to do, and I feel like Sister Rosetta Tharpe is an extraordinary example of that kind of person. That spirit is a gift, and then she reached out to a younger talent—Marie Knight—and helped her discover her own gift. I’m extremely proud to be sharing this gift with Mosaic audiences, with the help of my long-time friend and collaborator e’Marcus Harper-Short and the talented actors Roz White and Ayanna Reed.”

Additional Information about Marie and Rosetta

Opening/Press Night: Monday, August 27 at 7:30 PM
Closes: Sunday, September 30 at 3 PM
Ticket Prices: $20-$68
PWYC Preview: Wednesday, August 22 at 8 PM
Performance Times: 8 PM Wednesday-Saturday evenings; 3 PM Saturday & Sunday matinees; 7:30 PM on Sunday evenings

A full list of discussion dates and discussant bios will be available on http://www.mosaictheater.org/discussions

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION VISIT: http://www.mosaictheater.org/marie-and-rosetta

VALET PARKING AVAILABLE AT 1360 H ST NE on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings, as well as Saturday and Sunday matinees.
About George Brant
George Brant’s plays include *Grounded, Marie and Rosetta, Elephant’s Graveyard, The Mourners’ Bench, Into the Breeches!, Any Other Name, Salvage, Grizzly Mama, Three Voyages of the Lobotomobile*, and *Dark Room*. An Affiliate Writer at the Playwrights’ Center, his scripts have been produced internationally by the Public Theater, the Atlantic Theater Company, Cleveland Play House, the Alley Theatre, Trinity Repertory Company, the Studio Theatre, City Theatre, the Gate Theatre of London, Page 73, and the Traverse Theatre, among others. His plays have received a Lucille Lortel Award, an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award, a Kennedy Center National Playwriting Award, the Smith Prize, an Edinburgh Fringe First Award, a Creative Workforce Fellowship, three OAC Individual Excellence Awards, and the Keene Prize for Literature. He has been awarded writing fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, the McCarter Theatre Center, Blue Mountain Center, Hermitage Artists' Retreat, the Djerassi Resident Artist’s Program, and the Michener Center for Writers. He is published by Samuel French, Oberon Books and Smith & Kraus.

About Sandra L. Holloway
Sandra L. Holloway is a director and choreographer based in the Washington, DC area. Credits include: *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enough* for Theater Alliance; *Eyes* at Howard University; *I, Too, Sing America* for the Howard Players; *Alexander’s Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* at the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, tigertigertiger at Theater of the First Amendment; and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and *Guys and Dolls* for the GMU Players, among others. Some of her concert dance works have been featured at the Lincoln Theater Black Choreographers Showcase, Dance Theater of Harlem’s 40th Anniversary Celebration, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Hi-Arts Hip-Hop Theater Festival, Hollow Dance in Concert at Howard University Cramton Auditorium and Ira Aldridge Stage, *The 45 Degrees Project* (a partnership between Joy of Motion DC and Deeply Rooted Dance Company in Chicago), *New World Dance Company* in DC and is currently working with *Hill Dance Academy* in Pittsburgh. She is the Artistic Director of City at Peace, a youth development organization that uses the arts to effect social change, and is the founder of the Holloway arts project (the hap). She is the recipient of the National Association of Regional Ballet Choreographers Conference Award, Mayor’s Arts Award in Arts and Education for City at Peace, GAEA Foundation Sea Change Artist Award for Arts and Activism, and the 2015 Paula Giddings Arts Award. She is a graduate of the University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA.

About Roz White
Roz White is an award-winning actress, vocalist, and teaching artist. Roz is a graduate of The Duke Ellington School of the Arts, where she currently serves as a faculty member, and Howard University, where she has lectured and taught master classes since 2006. While studying at Howard University, Roz was crowned Miss Howard ’92 and Miss Collegiate African American ’93—representing 52 Historically Black Colleges and Universities throughout the US. Roz’s theatre credits include *Dreamgirls* (National Tour), *Bessie’s Blues* (Helen Hayes Award Winner), *Once on This Island*, *Crows*, *Don’t Stop the Carnival*, *Cool Papa’s Party*, *Ella Fitzgerald: First Lady of Song*, *Josephine Tonight, Bricktop, Uprising, Billie’s Song, Blues in the Night, The Good Times Are Killing Me, Gee’s Bend* (Helen Hayes Award Nomination), *Black Nativity*, *Mahalia: A Gospel Musical*, *Black Pearl Sings*, *Ladies Swing the Blues*, *Violet*, *Guys and Dolls*. 
and Dolls, Spunk, Legends, Three Sistahs, Uprising, Blackberry Daze, Fool In Love…The Frankie Lymon Story, Anne and Emmett, and The Gin Game. Roz has worked as a featured vocalist with Yolanda Adams, Stevie Wonder, James Ingram, Patti Austin, the late Gerald Levert, Ray Charles, and Michael Jackson. Other featured vocals credits include Florence and the Machine, Grayson Capps, Chante Moore, and Eric Roberson. Roz recorded two dance singles “A Little More Love” and “Bad for Me” which received praise in Billboard’s New and Noteworthy column. She is also featured on the gospel single “I’m a Soldier,” with NY-based team Exousia. Her film credits include How the Day Begins, Black and Blue, and Boomerang.

About Ayana Gregory
Ayana Reed is a singer and actor from Washington, DC who is on a mission to bring meaningful stories to life on stage and in front of the camera. Ayana showcases her versatility through performances such as an opera debut in Italy as Pamina in Mozart’s Die Zauberflöte to starring in the Helen Hayes nominated blues musical Blackberry Daze which garnered Reed rave reviews from The Washington Post. Her performance skills were developed at the renowned Duke Ellington School of the Arts and the Friends of Carter Barron Performing Arts Foundation, landing her on stages as prestigious as the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, and Lincoln Theatre. She has a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance and a minor in African and African American Studies from George Mason University.

About Mosaic Theater Company of DC
Independent, intercultural, entertaining, and uncensored, Mosaic Theater Company of DC is committed to making transformational, socially-relevant art, producing plays by authors on the front lines of conflict zones, and 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. Visit us at mosaictheater.org