

# Mosaic Theater Company of DC Press Release

Ari Roth, Founding Artistic Director • Serge Seiden, Managing Director & Producer



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SEASON ANNOUNCEMENT**

May 1, 2020

## **Mosaic Theater Company Announces Sixth Season** *This Is How We Live: Witnesses To History Unfolding*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Friday, May 1st, 2020) — In the face of global crisis and economic uncertainty, Mosaic Theater Company of DC will draw inspiration for its new season from a nucleus of towering yet under-appreciated figures in history; Activist Witnesses who respond, in word and deed, to calamity leaving a lasting imprint while transmitting their legacy to new generations. Mosaic's Season 6 will open and close with World Premieres that were to have been the triumphant finales of its #Woke Season 5. Now repositioned, these pertinent new plays about 20th Century icons join a slate of DC premieres about individuals caught in times of war, rampant fever, border conflict, and the global refugee crisis as history's relevance to our moment is reckoned with all season long.

The titles in Mosaic's Season 6 are: **INHERIT THE WINDBAG**, a World Premiere by **Alexandra Petri** (August 19 – September 20, 2020); **REMEMBER THIS: THE LESSON OF JAN KARSKI** featuring Academy Award nominee **David Strathairn**, co-written by **Derek Goldman and Clark Young** (October 20 – November 1, 2020). **THE NICETIES** by **Eleanor Burgess** (November 11 – December 13, 2020); **BORDERS**, two plays in one evening navigating zones of conflict and longing, by **Nimrod Danishman** and by **Henry Naylor** (January 20 – February 21, 2021; part of Mosaic's *Voices From a Changing Middle East Festival*); **MARYS SEACOLE** by **Jackie Sibblies Drury** (March 24 – May 2, 2021), and the World Premiere staging of **THE TILL TRILOGY**, three plays by **Ifa Bayeza** (June 10 – August 22, 2021).

"More than at any time in our theater's history," notes Mosaic Founding Artistic Director **Ari Roth**, "we are turning to eye-witnesses who have starkly illuminated the vivid nature of what ails us and what must be done to bend the moral arc of history toward justice and healing." These figures include Polish underground resistance fighter, **Jan Karski**; world-traveling Jamaican care provider, **Mary Seacole**; murdered Civil Rights icon **Emmett Till**, his mother **Mamie Till-Mobley**, and NAACP field reporter **Medgar Evers**; and a bevy of American authors who helped define mid-20th Century thinking: **Gore Vidal**, **William F. Buckley**, **James Baldwin**, **Norman Mailer** and **Ayn Rand**. They join a trio of fictional couples grappling with historic conflict, including a professor and student debating the role of slaves in America's Revolutionary War; internet suitors navigating the never-ending Arab-Israeli

conflict; and a Western photographer capturing the Syrian refugee crisis in a single, indelible image, implicating and indicting the onlooker's ambivalence.

"With all the massive disruption being experienced," Roth reflects on the continuing Covid-19 lockdown, "Mosaic is sustained by the pull of these new works we've been enmeshed with while planning our future. There's been an intense relationship with each of these challenging, provocative, resonant plays. And there wasn't an easy choice in the bunch! Nor is the decision to re-open – in coordination with the DC Mayor's office, under all the crucial safety guidelines – an easy choice. But we're compelled by these plays: 6 works by contemporary, kickass, female authors, and 3 pointed one-acts by men – all excavating new aspects of a terrain that has been a part of our landscape since our founding. These plays compel us to look within and summon courage to confront the self, society, and change accordingly."

**Serge Seiden**, Mosaic's Managing Director and Producer notes, "During this challenging time, the Mosaic staff is working from home, thankful to be safe and well. We and our Board wish the same to our family of loyal subscribers, generous supporters and volunteers, talented artists and our neighbors on H Street. Ever-resilient, Mosaic will reopen as permitted and instructed by District authorities. While no one knows yet exactly how and when this will happen, we are pleased that the Mayor has this week announced her ReOpenDC Advisory Group. I encourage everyone to consult the Mayor's excellent "Situational Daily Updates." <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/> Mosaic is utilizing the resources provided by the City to begin formulating reopening strategies. Please be assured that our first priority will be the safety and health of everyone involved – audience, staff, artists and crew. When the time comes, we will announce creative, comprehensive measures to safely deliver Mosaic's signature brand of artistry and essential cultural engagement. Please stay tuned for updates during the coming weeks. And please note: we're thrilled about Mosaic's improved website which will make information about Mosaic's safety measures, productions, and public programming much easier to access."

**Mosaic's Season 6 Line-Up** includes the following productions, all staged at the **Atlas Performing Arts Center** in Northeast, Washington, D.C. (Note: All dates and titles subject to change based on the unfolding public health situation):

August 19 – September 20, 2020

## **INHERIT THE WINDBAG**

World Premiere by Alexandra Petri | Directed by Lee Mikeska Gardner

Featuring Paul Morella as Gore Vidal and John Lescault as William F. Buckley

Press Night: Monday, August 24, 2020 at 7:30 pm

*Part of Locally Grown Mosaic and recipient of a Trish Vradenburg Play Commission*

**WaPo** humorist **Alexandra Petri's** pitched battle of bloviating wits revisits the televised Republican and Democratic Conventions of 1968 and the blistering nightly free-for-all between conservative pundit **William F. Buckley** and liberal author **Gore Vidal**. What ensues is a battle for history itself, in a no-holds-barred sesquipedalian brawl about another time when American politics was spinning toward entropy. A

protean cast of Demons bring the likes of Norman Mailer, Ayn Rand, James Baldwin, and Truman Capote back to shine bright light on these preening wordsmiths, wounded warriors on the battlefield of extreme partisanship.

October 20 – November 1, 2020

## **REMEMBER THIS: THE LESSON OF JAN KARSKI**

World Premiere Limited Run

by Derek Goldman and Clark Young

Directed by Derek Goldman | Featuring Academy Award Nominee David Strathairn

Press Night: Thursday, October 22, 2020 at 7:30 pm

*In collaboration with The Laboratory for Global Performance and Politics at Georgetown University*

**Academy Award nominee David Strathairn (*Lincoln*; *Good Night and Good Luck*) brings to life the harrowing journey of a courier for the Polish Underground who volunteers at great personal risk to carry an eyewitness report of the destruction of the Jewish people of Poland to the Free World.** In a solo tour-du-force performance, we meet the first of our season's towering Activist Witnesses; a whistle blower who reports his outrage to world leaders when none will listen. From the unimaginable despair of the Warsaw Ghetto and Nazi camps to the Oval Office, *Remember This* reveals the complex life of a witness, spy, diplomat, hero, and Georgetown University professor who overcame overwhelming odds to "shake the conscience of the world."

Christiane Amanpour, *CNN*: "I can't imagine a better time, not just because of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, but also because of the world we live in, for you to be playing and portraying this amazing man... and the unbelievable superhuman courage he showed to bear witness."

November 11 – December 13, 2020

## **THE NICETIES**

By Eleanor Burgess | Directed by Angelisa Gillyard

Featuring Naomi Jacobson

Press Night: Monday, November 16 at 7:30 pm

**At an elite East Coast University, Zoe, an ambitious Black student and Janine, her esteemed white professor debate Zoe's essay on the role of slaves in the American Revolution, pivoting from grammar and Google to race and reputation, as they face stunning implications that can't be undone.** Both women are liberal; both feminists, both brilliant; but before they know it, they're in dangerous territory neither of them has foreseen. Now in our post-Covid climate, the play takes on new timeliness as an Old Order teeters and an undergraduate threatens to consign her mentor to the dustbin of history.

Peter Marks of *The Washington Post* hailed *The Niceties* as "a barnburner of a play," adding that it's "one of the best plays I've seen about who gets to tell the story of America, and how."

January 20 – February 21, 2021

## **BORDERS**

**Two Plays in One Evening Navigating Zones of Conflict and Longing**

Anchor Production of Mosaic's *Voices From A Changing Middle East Festival*

**Press Night: Monday, January 25 at 7:30 pm**

### **BORDERS (I)**

**A Virtual Encounter Between Two Enemies on Grindr**

**By Nimrod Danishman | Directed by John Vreeke**

**A Grindr chat forms a relationship that crosses cultures, politics, wars and a technological landscape of screens, texts, emojis, and GIFs, as the tension of an imminent meeting between George from Lebanon and Boaz from Israel collides with intensifying skirmishes along Israel's northern border. 16 virtual conversations without commitment in a liminal area on the border transform a dividing line between two countries into a meeting point.**

*"A fine debut in its modest emotional honesty" - Haaretz*

### **BORDERS (II)**

**By Henry Naylor | Directed by John Vreeke | Featuring Elan Zafir**

**Sebastian, a once-celebrated British war photographer whose audience with Osama bin Laden prior to 9/11 shaped his career, is visited by a nameless, pregnant Syrian refugee struggling to stay afloat on a failing fishing boat in the Mediterranean and must decide whether to rescue her, or his career. Inspired by encounters with recent refugees, *Borders* is an urgent, occasionally hilarious, always moving commentary on one of the great crises of our time. One of the biggest hits of the 2018 Edinburgh Festival, the play accumulated 19 five- and four-star reviews and the Carol Tambor Best of Edinburgh Award before North American performances at the Spoleto Festival and New York Theatre Workshop.**

*"A profound reminder of the power of art and culture" - Evening Standard*

**With additional Voices From a Changing Middle East Festival programming, including:**

### **I, DAREEN T**

**By Einat Weizman, based on the Life and Incarceration of Dareen Tatour**

**A Voices Festival Off-Night Chamber Production: February 1-21, 2021**

**Arrested for a poem she's written and posted on YouTube, Palestinian poet Dareen Tatour shares her story with Israeli author and actress, Einat Weizman (*Shame 2.0*), recalling a childhood of trauma, resistance, finding voice, and solidarity in friendship, and finally, liberation.**

## **MY BRIEF AFFAIR WITH THE MINISTER**

**By Ari Roth | Directed by John Vreeke**

**A Voices Festival Workshop Reading: Feb 8 & 15, 2021**

**An artistic director chronicles the attempt to bring an audacious cross-cultural collaboration to the stage. It doesn't go as hoped. A provocative show-down between two admired Israeli/Palestinian artists and their arch-rival censor in the Israeli government fails to make it out of a fraught rehearsal room. In losing artistic control, the author begins to get a sense of what's revealed amid the wreckage.**

**March 24 – May 2, 2021**

## **MARYS SEACOLE**

**By Jackie Sibblies Drury | Directed by Eric Ruffin**

**Featuring Kim Bey and Felicia Curry**

**Press Night: Monday, March 29 at 7:30 pm**

**The latest work from the Pulitzer Prize winning author of *Fairview* celebrates the complex legacy of care-giving and frontline nursing on the battlefield of trauma, crisis, and war. Mary Seacole, an ambitious Jamaican woman determined to live a grand life of service, traverses oceans and eras as she and her descendants contend with layers of racial disparity and inequity when considering who gets treatment first in times of crisis, and who is left to console whom. More than any play this season, *Marys Seacole* speaks to the selfless, life-affirming spirit evinced during our current global crisis. "A breathless and radiant new play!" — Ben Brantley, *NY Times***

**June 10 – August 22, 2021**

## **THE TILL TRILOGY**

**World Premiere Staging**

**By Ifa Bayeza | Directed by Talvin Wilks**

**Featuring Scott W. Abernethy, Anna Theoni DiGiovanni, Drew Kopas,**

**Billie Krishawn, Lolita Marie, Clayton Pelham, Jr., Jefferson A. Russell,**

**Matthew R. Wilson, Jaysen Wright, and Vaughn Ryan Midder as Emmett Till**

*Made possible with continuing support from The Roy Cockrum Foundation*

**The now legendary story of Emmett "Bo" Till remains one of the most pivotal incidents of the 20th Century and is believed to have launched the modern Civil Rights Movement. This landmark undertaking brings to life the vividness of Emmett's voice and spirit, the richness of his world, the tragedy of his brutal death, the miscarriage of justice in the trial of his murderers, and the indelible impact of his legacy on those left behind.**

## **PART I. THE BALLAD OF EMMETT TILL**

Press Night: Monday, June 14 at 7:30 pm

Bayeza's Edgar Award-winning drama recounts the last two weeks of young Emmett Till's life on his journey from Chicago to Money, Mississippi, revealing his boisterous, stuttering character and his fateful encounter with Caroline Bryant, the young white woman whose accusations led to Emmett's subsequent murder.

## **PART II. THAT SUMMER IN SUMNER**

Press Night: Monday, July 12 at 7:30 pm

This world premiere recreates the 1955 trial, "The State of Mississippi vs. Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam for the Murder of Emmett Till," with scenes beyond the courtroom involving local and national investigative black press who were the real heroes uncovering crucial facts in the landmark case. Drawn from courtroom transcript, contemporaneous news accounts, government records and field reports of a young Medgar Evers of the NAACP, *Summer in Sumner* condenses the five-day trial into a kaleidoscopic, compact drama.

## **PART III. BENEVOLENCE**

Press Night: Monday, August 2 at 7:30 pm

The thrilling, intimate conclusion to this epic trilogy examines the home life of Emmett's accuser and the eventual recantation of much of Caroline Bryant's testimony. *Benevolence* then visits the neighboring town of Glendora, Mississippi and follows the combustible relationship of a local black couple, Clinton and Beulah Melton, whose lives are at risk because of the information they possess.

**About The Roy Cockrum Foundation:** The Roy Cockrum Foundation enables theaters to reach beyond their normal scope of activities and undertake ambitious and creative productions. It awards major grants to support world-class performing arts projects in not-for-profit professional theaters throughout the United States of America.

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### **Mosaic Public Programming**

As always and in advancement of its mission, Mosaic will host a series of post-show discussions exploring resonant themes present in our Season 6 offering featuring a diverse set of panelists. These free post-show discussions, beginning immediately after the performance. Please visit [www.mosaictheater.org/discussions](http://www.mosaictheater.org/discussions) for more information.

In response to our current times of disruption, Mosaic has launched a new Virtual Public Programming Series, MOSAIC ALIVE. Engage with Mosaic artists, scholars, local and national leaders, and most of all, with others as we explore urgent themes, compelling topics, and behind-the-scenes stories from our soon-to-be-announced new slate of Season 6 offerings. These offerings include community Peace Cafes Discussions and Creative Conversation Roundtables with local artists and thinkers.

MOSAIC ALIVE builds on all the exciting community-building practices that have distinguished the Mosaic experience – An intercultural community engaging with joy and with rigor on some of the most pressing issues of our moment, informed by art of the highest order.

Join us each Monday and Friday as we gather to bring out transformational, thought-provoking ideas and experiences from the artists and experts closest to the material. We'll continue to gather twice-weekly until the world premiere of Alexandra Petri's *Inherit the Windbag* in late August. More info and schedule at [www.mosaictheater.org/alive](http://www.mosaictheater.org/alive)

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### **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.

### **Mosaic performs at the Atlas Performing Arts Center**

1333 H Street NE, Washington, DC 20002

Tickets may be purchased online at [mosaictheater.org](http://mosaictheater.org)

Or by phone at 202-399-7993

For more information, visit us at [mosaictheater.org](http://mosaictheater.org)