

# PRESS RELEASE

**STUDIO**  
THEATRE

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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
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## STUDIO ANNOUNCES 2019-2020 SEASON MAIN SERIES

- Main Series begins with **John Patrick Shanley**'s Pulitzer Prize-winning moral drama *Doubt: A Parable*
- Now in his tenth season as Artistic Director, **David Muse** directs *Fun Home*, Studio's first Main Series musical since its acclaimed production of *Grey Gardens*
- The US premiere of Thai-Australian writer **Anchuli Felicia King** with her caustic comedy *White Pearl*

Studio Theatre is pleased to announce its 2019-2020 Main Series Season, five productions marked by their expansive curiosity and theatrical dexterity. The plays in Studio's 41<sup>st</sup> season range from an indictment of a failing education system to a complex consideration of authority and abuse in the Catholic Church, a raucous comedy about the ugliness of the beauty industry to a humane but unflinching look at young Black men caught in a cycle of violence beyond their control, and an excavation of a childhood shaped by a parent's secret life. Characteristically Studio, these productions span the globe, or head back in time, to powerfully illuminate our present moment.

"This is a season that offers a bit of many things—these plays are impressively different from one another," says Studio Artistic Director **David Muse**. "But they also do what our work does at its best: take some of the most urgent problems or complex personal questions we face and match them with human-sized stories. Each play has great parts for great actors and plunges its audience into the thick of their struggle. Some are funny, some are chilling, and we're excited about them all."

The Main Series begins with *Doubt: A Parable*, **John Patrick Shanley**'s potent, Pulitzer Prize-winning drama about a nun who suspects a priest of sexual misconduct with one of her students. Shanley's moral drama is as complex as it was 15 years ago, and its questions of how to handle unprovable suspicions—and how the most vulnerable usually bear the brunt of unequal justice—are as timely as ever. The Main Series continues with the US premiere of *White Pearl* and playwright **Anchuli Felicia King**, with a comedy about toxic corporate culture set in the Singapore headquarters of a cosmetics company. Felicia is an Australian-Thai writer about to have a breakout year on the international stage. *White Pearl* will be her professional debut—it

will premiere at The Royal Court Theatre in London and at Sydney Theatre Company before Studio produces the North American premiere in the fall.

**Dominique Morrisseau**, whose *Skeleton Crew* introduced the playwright to DC and anchored Studio's 2017-2018 Season, returns with *Pipeline*, a piercing and compassionate look at America's broken education system and a mother trying to get her son through it. Studio will introduce another exciting writer to DC with **Antoinette Nwandu's** *Pass Over*, a contemporary riff on *Waiting for Godot* featuring two young, homeless Black men who are seemingly stuck on their street corner.

Studio concludes its Main Series with *Fun Home*, **Jeanine Tesori** and **Lisa Kron's** Tony Award-winning musical adaptation of **Alison Bechdel's** pioneering graphic memoir about her childhood, directed by **Muse**. Scaling the music to Studio's intimate theatres—the Broadway tour played The National Theatre in DC—magnifies the power of this joyful and bittersweet musical.

Play dates, directors, and Studio X programming will be announced at a later date.

## MAIN SERIES

Studio's Main Series is the core of its programming, offering a repertoire of provocative new and contemporary writing and inventive stagings of modern classics.

### Pipeline

by **Dominique Morrisseau**

“An ethically ambiguous drama that raises barbed questions about class, race, parental duty, and the state of American education.”

—*Variety*

Nya is a Black single mom and dedicated teacher at a high-poverty city school, determined to give her teenaged son Omari opportunities that her students will never have. When an altercation with a teacher at his private school threatens Omari's future, Nya has to fight a system that's against him in any environment. A searing, eloquent, and deeply compassionate look at a broken education system, the price Black men pay for their anger, and the ferocity of one parent's love.

### *White Pearl* (US Premiere)

by **Anchuli Felicia King**

Clearday is a cosmetics company on the rise: Based in Singapore, launching a global skincare range, and bringing a start-up mentality to the big leagues. But a draft ad for their latest skin whitening cream surfaces on YouTube, gathering views and outrage. As morning news in the US market—19,643 views. 467,327. 654,398.—Clearday's all-female team hustles to contain the damage before *Buzzfeed* weighs in. Someone's definitely getting fired. A comedy from rising Thai-Australian writer Anchuli Felicia King about toxic corporate culture, selling whiteness, and shame as both a cultural commodity and canny marketing strategy.

***Doubt: A Parable*** (2005 Pulitzer Prize for Drama; Tony Award for Best New Play)  
by **John Patrick Shanley**

“A lean, potent drama...passionate, exquisite, important and engrossing.”  
—*Newsday*

The Bronx, 1964. Suspicions surface at a parochial school about a charismatic young priest’s interest in a Catholic school’s first and only Black student. Absent hard proof, Sister Aloysius, the school’s starched and self-assured principal, tries to protect the innocent—but is she doing God’s work or is her certitude actually pride? A searing masterwork by John Patrick Shanley about faith, ambiguity, and the price of moral conviction.

***Pass Over***  
By **Antoinette Nwandu**

“Searing, daring, blazingly theatrical, and thrillingly tense.”  
—*New York Times* (Best Plays of 2018)

Kitch and Moses seem stuck on their street corner, but it don’t matter. They joke, dream, and throw down about the promised land they’re heading to just as soon as they get up off the block—what they’ll eat, who they’ll see, whether today’s the day they’ll pass over. Allegorical and immediate, humorous and chilling, Nwandu’s collision of the Exodus saga and *Waiting for Godot* probes the forces that have marooned these young Black men, and the power and limitations of their personal resilience.

***Fun Home*** (2015 Tony Award for Best New Musical)  
music by **Jeanine Tesori**  
book and lyrics by **Lisa Kron**  
based on the graphic novel by **Alison Bechdel**

“A rare beauty, extraordinary and heart-gripping.”  
—*New York Times*

Alison is 9, begging her father to play with her. She is 19, overcome by the aching and joyous pain of first love. She is 43, an out lesbian hunting for the truth of her brilliant, volatile, and closeted father’s life and death. She is all three at once, trying to untangle the central mystery of her childhood: How did she survive their shared hometown, when her father could not? With a score that ranges from exuberant ’70s pop to aching melodies and dissonant harmonies of characters longing to be known, *Fun Home* is the award-winning story of a daughter and father, of coming out and coming to terms with a life shaped by a family’s secrets.

## **SEASON ARTIST BIOS**

**John Patrick Shanley** is from the Bronx. His plays include *The Portuguese Kid*, *Prodigal Son*, *Outside Mullingar* (Tony Award nomination), *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*, *Savage in Limbo*, *Four Dogs and a Bone*, *Dirty Story*, and *Beggars in the House of Plenty*. His theatrical work is

performed extensively around the world. For his play *Doubt: A Parable*, he received both the Tony Award and the Pulitzer Prize. In the arena of screenwriting he has nine films to his credit, most recently *Doubt* with Meryl Streep, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Amy Adams, and Viola Davis. *Doubt*, directed by John, was nominated for five Academy Awards, including Best Adapted Screenplay. Other films include *Five Corners* (Special Jury Prize, Barcelona), *Alive, Joe Versus the Volcano* (which he also directed), and *Live from Baghdad* for HBO (Emmy nomination). For his script of *Moonstruck*, he received both the Writers Guild of America Award and an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. In 2009, The Writers Guild of America awarded him the Lifetime Achievement in Writing.

**Anchuli Felicia King** is a multidisciplinary artist of Australian-Thai descent who works primarily in live theatre. Felicia will have her professional playwriting debut with two world premiere plays in 2019: *White Pearl* to be performed at London's renowned Royal Court Theatre in May, directed by Nana Dakin. *White Pearl* will have its Australian debut at Sydney Theatre Company in October 2019 and its US premiere at Studio Theatre. Felicia's play *Golden Shield* will premiere in August at Melbourne Theatre Company. Her play *Slaughterhouse* was selected as part of Melbourne Theatre Company's Cyber Electric 2018 readings. Currently based in New York, Felicia has worked as a writer, dramaturg, sound designer, projection designer, and creative consultant with a wide range of companies, including Punchdrunk, PlayCo, Roundabout Theatre, 59E59, Ars Nova, the Obie Awards, The Builders Association, Ensemble Studio Theatre (EST), and Red Bull Theater. Felicia explores linguistic hybrids, digital cultures, and issues of global urgency, and is a member of EST's Youngblood Group, Ars Nova's Play Group, and Roundabout's Space Jam Program. Areas of interest include emerging technologies, 2D animation, VFX and projection design, music production, and writing for performance. Felicia works globally with companies such as Playwriting Australia (Sydney), Yellow Earth Theatre (London), House of North (Berlin), and SHIFT Festival (Shanghai).

**Dominique Morrisseau** is the author of *The Detroit Project (A 3-Play Cycle)* which includes *Skeleton Crew* (Atlantic Theater Company), *Paradise Blue* (Signature Theatre), and *Detroit '67* (Public Theater, Classical Theatre of Harlem, and NBT). Additional plays include *Pipeline* (Lincoln Center Theatre), *Sunset Baby* (LAByrinth Theatre), *Blood at the Root* (National Black Theatre), and *Follow Me to Nellie's* (Premiere Stages). She is also the book writer on the new musical *Ain't Too Proud – The Life and Times of the Temptations* (Broadway/Berkeley Repertory Theatre). Dominique is an alumna of The Public Theater Emerging Writer's Group, Women's Project Lab, and Lark Playwrights Workshop, and has developed work at Sundance Lab, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference. Her work has been commissioned by Steppenwolf Theatre, Women's Project, South Coast Repertory, People's Light and Theatre, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival/Penumbra Theatre. She most recently served as Co-Producer on the Showtime series *Shameless*. Awards include: the Spirit of Detroit Award, PoNY Fellowship, Sky-Cooper Prize, TEER Trailblazer Award, Steinberg Playwright Award, Audelco Awards, NBFT August Wilson Playwriting Award, Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama, Obie Award, Ford Foundation Art of Change Fellowship, and being named one of *Variety's* Women of Impact (2017-18).

**Antoinette Nwandu** is a New York-based playwright, who was born and raised in Los Angeles. Her play *Pass Over* received its New York debut at LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater. A filmed

version of the Jeff Award-winning Steppenwolf production, directed by Spike Lee, premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival and at SXSW, and is currently streaming on Amazon Prime. Victory Gardens produced the world premiere of her play *Breach: a manifesto on race in america through the eyes of a black girl recovering from self-hate* in February 2018. Antoinette is a MacDowell Fellow, a Dramatists Guild Fellow, and an Ars Nova Play Group alum. Honors include the 2018 Whiting Award, the 2017 Paula Vogel Playwriting Award, the Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award, the Negro Ensemble Company's Douglas Turner Ward Prize, a Literary Fellowship at the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference, and spots on the 2016 and 2017 Kilroys lists. Her work has been supported by the Sundance Theatre Lab, Space on Ryder Farm, Ignition Fest, the Cherry Lane Mentor Project, the Kennedy Center, Page73, PlayPenn, Southern Rep Theatre, The Flea Theater, Naked Angels, Fire This Time, and The Movement Theatre Company. Antoinette has a bachelor's degree in English, magna cum laude, from Harvard College; an MS from The University of Edinburgh; and an MFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. Antoinette is a writer on the second season of Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* for Netflix, and is under commission from Echo Theater Company, Colt Coeur, Ars Nova, and Audible.

**Lisa Kron** is a writer and performer whose work has been widely produced in New York, regionally, and internationally. Her plays include *Well*, *2.5 Minute Ride*, and *The Ver\*\*zon Play*. She wrote the book and lyrics for the musical *Fun Home* (with music by composer Jeanine Tesori), winner of five Tony Awards, including Best Musical. Lisa and Jeanine were the first all-woman team to ever receive a Tony for best score. As an actor, Lisa was most recently seen as Mrs. Mi-Tzu and Mrs. Yang in The Foundry Theatre's acclaimed production of *Good Person of Szechuan* (Lortel Award, Outstanding Featured Actress). Honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Doris Duke Performing Artists Award, and the Cal Arts/Alpert Award. She is a proud founding member of the Obie- and Bessie Award-winning collaborative theater company The Five Lesbian Brothers. Lisa currently serves as Secretary of the Dramatists Guild Council and on the boards of the MacDowell Colony and The Lilly Awards.

**Jeanine Tesori** has written a diverse catalog for Broadway, opera, film, and television. Her Broadway musicals include *Fun Home* (2015 Tony Award Winner, Pulitzer finalist); *Violet; Caroline, or Change; Shrek the Musical; Thoroughly Modern Millie; Twelfth Night* (LCT); and John Guare's *A Free Man of Color*. Her Off Broadway credits include *Mother Courage* (starring Meryl Streep) at The Public Theater/Shakespeare in the Park. She has received five Tony nominations, three Obie Awards, and three Drama Desk Awards. The hallmarks of her work have been described as "close-to-the-surface emotion, structural rigor and rhythmic drive." Her operas include *The Lion, the Unicorn and Me; Blizzard on Marblehead Neck* (MET/LCT Opera/Theater and Glimmerglass opera commission); and her upcoming collaboration with Tazewell Thompson, *Blue*, which was commissioned for Glimmerglass opera company and will premiere there next season. She wrote the musical featured in the 2016 revival of *Gilmore Girls* and has also written special material for artists, such as "The Girl in 14G" for Kristin Chenoweth. She has been featured in the documentaries *Show Business* and *Theater of War*. Jeanine became the founding Artistic Director of a new concert series at New York City Center called Encores! Off-Center for which she has helmed seasons joined by artists such as Stephen Sondheim, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Randy Newman, William Finn, Alan Menken, Renee Elise Goldsberry, Sutton Foster, and Jonathan Groff. After producing four seasons of Off-Center

concerts, she took one of those concerts, *Sunday in the Park with George* (starring Jake Gyllenhaal), to Broadway where she produced the 2017 revival, with ATG and Riva Marker. She was the recording producer for *Sunday* as well as the Original Cast Recordings of *Violet; Caroline, or Change; Shrek; and Twelfth Night*. A lecturer in music at Yale and on faculty at Columbia University, Jeanine has spoken and taught at universities and programs all over the country. She is the founding Creative Director of the non-profit A BroaderWay, an arts empowerment program for young women. She was given the Einhorn Mentorship Award by Primary Stages for her exceptional work with young artists.

## **STUDIO THEATRE**

Over the past four decades, Studio Theatre has established itself as Washington's premier venue for contemporary theatre, "where local audiences will find today's edgiest playwrights" (*Variety*). One of the most respected mid-sized theatres in the country, Studio produces exceptional contemporary drama in deliberately intimate spaces. Drawing inspiration from great ensembles—where people work together with a spirit of generosity and professional rigor—Studio brings characteristic thoughtfulness and daring to its work onstage and off, through its new work incubator and engagement, education, and workforce training initiatives. Every year, Studio serves nearly 75,000 people, including more than 1,000 youth and young adults through engagement and education initiatives. Throughout Studio's 41-year history, the quality of its work has been recognized by sustained community support, as well as 70 Helen Hayes Awards for excellence in professional theatre.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Location:** 1501 14th Street NW (northeast corner of 14th and P Streets).

**Parking:** Studio has a parking partnership with Washington Plaza Hotel at 10 Thomas Circle NW, three blocks south of Studio; patrons who park at the hotel's parking garage can purchase a \$13 voucher at concessions. Street parking is extremely limited; arrive early to increase your options.

**Metro Stops:** Red Line: Dupont Circle, Orange/Blue Lines: McPherson Square, and Green/Yellow Lines: U Street/Cardozo.

**Accessibility:** Studio's theatres are all wheelchair accessible; seats are available by reservation. Assistive listening devices are available for all shows at concessions. Call the Box Office at 202.332.3300 for more information.

## **Contact Information:**

**Tickets and Subscriptions:** 202.332.3300

**Administration:** 202.232.7267

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