

PRESS RELEASE

STUDIO
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STUDIO THEATRE AWARDED DORIS DUKE BUILDING DEMAND FOR THE ARTS GRANT; PARTNERS WITH PSALMAYENE 24 ON MULTI-YEAR OUTREACH

Studio Theatre is one of eight theatres across the country, and the only arts organization in Washington, DC, to receive an 18-month capacity building grant from the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's** (DDCF) Building Demand for the Arts program, the Foundation announced this week. The program funds artists and arts institutions working to forge long-lasting relationships with diverse audiences.

Of the nearly \$1.3 million awarded by DDCF, Studio received \$82,500 to invest in connecting with African American millennial audiences in DC, in collaboration with director and playwright Psalmayene 24 (Psalm). He joins Studio as Artist-in-Residence during the grant period, which extends through the 2020-2021 Season.

Studio's work with Psalm begins around its production of Antoinette Nwandu's explosive breakthrough play *Pass Over*, directed by Psalm. Engagement efforts include the *Pass Over* Community Tour, which will bring readings of the play to five sites throughout the DC-area this spring: Duke Ellington School of the Arts, Howard University, the Anacostia and Shaw branches of the DC Public Library, and Joe's Movement Emporium. Readings will be accompanied by talkbacks, panels, and other activities created in partnership with host venues to help process and spark discussion about this important contemporary work.

Studio and Psalm will continue to collaborate on ways to engage African American millennials through social events, talkbacks, workshops, and residencies tailored to specific Studio productions.

DDCF's Building Demand for the Arts program supports organizations and artists in joint efforts to ignite interest and engagement in jazz, theatre, and contemporary dance. This program is predicated on the beliefs that artists are key connectors to communities, and that artists and organizations can work together in imaginative new ways to attract and engage audiences. These grants also promote deeper partnerships, longer relationships, and new kinds of conversation and cooperation between organizations and artists.

"Studio is uniquely positioned in a neighborhood of Washington, DC that has undergone rapid, dramatic transition. How to engage the changing populations moving into our community, as well as our neighbors who have been here since Studio was founded, is a frequent conversation among our team," said Studio's Artistic Director **David Muse**. "Doris Duke's support enables us to continue refining, honing, and shaping our community engagement initiatives, as we strive to be an institution that reflects the diversity in our city."

"We are thrilled to support these exciting collaborations between artists and organizations that will deepen their relationships with one another and with a broader swath of communities around the country," said **Maurine Knighton**, program director for the Arts. "We look forward to seeing the impact of their

work together to engage new and existing audiences in jazz, theater and dance across cultures and geographies.”

“Whether I am directing, writing, acting, or facilitating a workshop, my intention is always the same: illumination and revelation—to uncover an idea, or even a feeling, that gives useful meaning to our human existence. African American people are usually at the center of the stories that I create, and through these narratives I strive to reach the universality of the broader human experience,” said **Psalmayene 24**. “As a Generation Xer from the African diaspora, I look forward to the opportunity to mentor African American millennials and help foster their relationship with Studio.”

DDCF awarded grants to 14 artists and arts organizations, eight of which are theatres. Other theatre grant recipients are Actors Theatre of Louisville (Louisville, KY), Childsplay (Phoenix, AZ), Cornerstone Theater Company (Los Angeles, CA), InterAct Theatre Company (Philadelphia, PA), Mixed Blood Theatre Company (Minneapolis, MN), Su Teatro (Denver, CO), and Trinity Repertory Company (Providence, RI).

ABOUT STUDIO THEATRE

Studio Theatre is Washington’s premier venue for contemporary theatre, “where local audiences will find today’s edgiest playwrights” (*Variety*). One of the most respected midsized 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. Studio serves nearly 75,000 people each year, including more than 1,000 youth and young adults through community engagement initiatives. Founded in 1978, the quality of Studio’s work has been recognized by sustained community support, as well as 72 Helen Hayes Awards for excellence in professional theatre.

ABOUT PSALMAYENE 24

Psalmayene 24 is an award-winning director, playwright, and actor. Directing credits include *Native Son* by Nambi E. Kelley at Mosaic Theater Company, *Words Become Flesh* (recipient of five 2017 Helen Hayes Awards, including Outstanding Direction of a Play) by Marc Bamuthi Joseph at Theater Alliance, and *The Shipment* by Young Jean Lee at Forum Theatre. He has received commissions from the African Continuum Theatre Company, Arena Stage, Imagination Stage, The Kennedy Center, Theater Alliance, Solas Nua, and Mosaic Theater Company. His one-man play, *Free Jujube Brown!*, is published in the anthology *Plays from the Boom Box Galaxy: Theater from the Hip-Hop Generation* (TCG).

ABOUT THE DORIS DUKE CHARITBLE FOUNDATION

The mission of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) is to improve the quality of people’s lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research and child well-being, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke’s properties. The Arts Program of DDCF focuses its support on contemporary dance, jazz and theater artists, and the organizations that nurture, present and produce them. For more information, please visit www.ddcf.org.

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