

PRESS RELEASE

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PSALMAYENE 24 REIMAGINES WILL POWER'S SEMINAL HIP-HOP THEATRE WORK, *FLOW*, FOR A NEW GENERATION

Flow

Written by **Will Power**

Directed by **Psalmayene 24**

Streaming at studiotheatre.org from May 21 – June 13, 2021

Press streaming begins May 20, 2021—RSVP for a digital ticket

“Power catches the distinctive rhythms of these street singers’ individualized idioms and finds the pulse that makes them come alive.”

—*Variety*

Studio Theatre Artist in Residence **Psalmayene 24** directs a reimagined *Flow* by hip-hop theatre forebear **Will Power**, drawing inspiration from 90s hip-hop aesthetic and starring **Justin Weaks**, available to **stream on studiotheatre.org from May 21 – June 13, 2021**. Speaking in verse and backed live by **DJ Nick tha 1da**, Weaks shares the stories of one community and its seven storytellers, showing off their neighborhood in a call-and-response through history, from the griot tradition to the next generation of artists who will make the tradition for their times.

“Will Power initially brought *Flow* to Studio in 2004, and we’re delighted to have it back for a new production under the direction of Psalmayene 24,” said **Studio Artistic Director David Muse**. “The two artists have a friendship that enriches and informs this new iteration.”

About *Flow*

Will Power’s percussive look at one urban community and its seven storytellers, who gossip and riff, declare and reveal, showing off their neighborhood through its stories, from trivial to tragic. Backed by a live DJ and unfolding in rhythm and rhyme, *Flow* is a call and response through history, from the griot tradition to the next artists who will make the tradition for their times. Will Power toured the piece to Studio in 2004 and Doris Duke Artist in Residence Psalmayene 24 directs a new production for a new generation.

ABOUT WILL POWER

Will Power is an internationally renowned playwright, performer, lyricist, and educator. His plays and performances have been seen in hundreds of theatres and concert halls throughout the world including Lincoln Center, The Public Theater, The Battersea Arts Centre (UK), and the Sydney Opera House, as well as numerous venues in Asia, Africa, Europe, and throughout North America.

Called “the best verse playwright in America” by *New York Magazine*, Will is an innovator and dramatic explorer of new theatrical forms. He is one of the pioneers and co-creators of hip-hop theatre, a late 20th Century artform that led the way for future iconic works such as Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*, as well as dozens of education programs being established throughout the country. He is also a master craftsman of traditionally based plays and musicals, including the play *Fetch Clay, Make Man* which has been produced by the McCarter Theatre Center, New York Theatre Workshop, Round House Theatre, Kenny Leon’s True Colors Theatre Company, and many others. Will’s other plays include *Stagger Lee* (Dallas Theater Company); *The Seven* (La Jolla Playhouse, New York Theatre Workshop, and Ten Thousand Things Theater); *Seize the King* (La Jolla Playhouse and Alliance Theatre); and *Detroit Red* (ArtsEmerson). He is also the writer of children’s theatre pieces *Five Fingers of Funk* (Children’s Theatre Company) and *Honey Bo and the Goldmine* (La Jolla Playhouse). Will’s collaboration with Anne Bogart’s SIT Company and composer Julia Wolfe resulted in the performance piece *Steel Hammer*, which performed at the Humana Festival, UCLA’s Center for the Art of Performance, and Brooklyn Academy of Music, before its world tour.

Will’s numerous awards include The Doris Duke Artist Award, a Lucille Lortel Award, a United States Artist Prudential Fellowship, an NEA/TCG Residency Grant, TCG Peter Zeisler Memorial Award, a NYFA Award, a Joyce Foundation Award, and a 2020 Elliot Norton Award for Outstanding New Script, *Detroit Red*.

Will is also a passionate teacher of writing and performance. He has held fellowships, residencies, and faculty positions at City College of New York, Princeton University, Wayne State University, University of Michigan-Flint, University of Massachusetts Amherst, and Spelman College in Atlanta. Currently, Will is a Professor of Theater at Occidental College in Los Angeles, CA.

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, *Word Becomes 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 CAST

Justin Weaks (Will Power, The 7th Storyteller) returns to Studio after appearing in last season’s production of *Pipeline* and *Curve of Departure* during the 2017-2018 season. Selected local credits include *BLKS*, *Gloria*, and *Describe the Night* at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company; *Fences* at Ford’s Theatre; *Long Way Down* at The Kennedy Center; *Gem of the Ocean* at Round House Theatre; *The Christians* at Theater J; *Word Becomes Flesh* and *Still Life with Rocket* at Theater Alliance; and *Charm* at

Mosaic Theater Company. Additional regional and New York credits include work with Ensemble Studio Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Shakespeare & Company, and Barter Theatre. Justin received a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor and Ensemble (*Word Becomes Flesh* at Theater Alliance) and holds an additional three nominations for his work. He is a teaching artist in the DMV area and a company member at Woolly Mammoth. He holds a BA in Theatre from Greensboro College.

ABOUT THE CREATIVE TEAM

Sherrice Mojgani (Lighting Design) recently designed for DC-area productions of *2.5 Minute Ride* at Studio; *The Heiress* and *Two Trains Running* at Arena Stage; and *Spunk, Ain't Misbehavin'*, and *The Scottsboro Boys* at Signature Theatre. Regionally, she has designed for *A Few Good Men* and *Sweat* at Pittsburgh Public Theater; *What You Are* and *Skeleton Crew* at The Old Globe; *Roz and Ray*, *Black Pearl Sings*, and *Outside Mullingar* at San Diego Repertory Theatre; and *Blue Door*, *Trouble in Mind*, and *Mud Blue Sky* at MOXIE Theatre. Sherrice is an Assistant Professor at George Mason University. She holds a BA in Theater Arts from UC Santa Cruz and an MFA in Lighting Design from UC San Diego. smojgani.com.

Nick "tha 1da" Hernandez (DJ/Composer/Sound Designer) is a sample-based producer, DJ, and artist. He has produced original compositions for *Long Way Down* at The Kennedy Center, *The Hip-Hop Children's Trilogy* with playwright Psalmayene 24 at Imagination Stage, *Fences* at Ford's Theatre, *Native Son* and *Les Deux Noir* at Mosaic Theater Company, *Word Becomes Flesh* (Helen Hayes Award, Outstanding Production) at Theater Alliance, and *Havana Hop* and *All The Way Live!* with sibling Paige Hernandez at Discovery Theater. Additionally, Nick has produced compositions and projects for Hot 97 FM, Red Bull Music, Netflix, DC Public Library, Arena Stage, Smithsonian Associates, and Words Beats & Life Inc. On social media at [@nicktha1da](https://twitter.com/nicktha1da).

Tony Thomas (Choreographer) is an independent artist working in a wide range of arts and entertainment mediums. His credits include *Pass Over* and *P.Y.G. or the Misedumacation of Dorian Belle* at Studio, *Native Son* at Mosaic Theater Company, *Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Aida* at Constellation Theatre Company, and *The Freshest Snow Whyte* and *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* at Imagination Stage. He was nominated for Outstanding Choreography by the Helen Hayes Awards in 2019 for *P.Y.G.* at Studio and in 2016 for *Word Becomes Flesh* at Theater Alliance. Performance credits include *West Side Story* (Tio) National Tour, *Guys & Dolls*, and *A Chorus Line* (2014 Helen Hayes Award, Outstanding Musical Production) at Olney Theatre Center. He currently serves as Head of Dance and Artistic Supervisor (Pre-Professional Program) at Adventure Theatre MTC, sits on the board and dance faculty with Ngoma Center for Dance, and actively leads numerous workshops and coaching circuits. Tony Thomas Designs was developed in 2004, featuring Tio Diaz Studio as a premiere design house in Interior Architecture and Creative Direction.

Allie Roy (Production Stage Manager) returns after stage managing Studio's first audio play, *Kings*, and two streaming plays, *Cock* and *2.5 Minute Ride*, this season. Her other Studio credits include *Admissions*, *If I Forget*, *Translations*, *Curve of Departure*, *Straight White Men*, *Murder Ballad*, *Silence! The Musical*, and the world premiere of *Animal* for the Women's Voices Theater Festival. Regional credits include *West Side Story* in concert with the National Symphony Orchestra and *Love, Factually* at The Kennedy Center; the world premieres of *Mrs. Miller Does Her Thing* and *Diner*, as well as *A Chorus Line*, *Grand Hotel*, *The Scottsboro Boys*, *West Side Story*, and *Elmer Gantry* at Signature Theatre; the world premiere of *After the War*, as well as *When January Feels Like Summer* and *Ulysses on Bottles* at Mosaic Theater Company; and *The Originalist* at Arena Stage.

Wes Culwell (Director of Video) is an award-winning producer and director. He founded Studiio Box Creative in 2012 and has been committed to creating visibility around social justice issues as well as establishing Studiio Box as a premier creative agency in the greater Washington, DC area. Wes has spent more than 20 years in production, including nine years producing for networks such as NBC, Bravo, Oxygen, VH1, TLC, and National Geographic. During this challenging year for the arts, Wes has focused his energies on assisting theatrical companies to bring their visions to the digital screen. He received a BA in Drama from the University of California, Irvine and an MFA in Cinema from San Francisco State University. studioboxdc.com.

Adrien-Alice Hansel (Dramaturg) is the Literary Director at Studio, where she has dramaturged the world premieres of *I Hate It Here*, *Queen of Basel*, *The Remains*, *No Sisters*, *I Wanna Fucking Tear You Apart*, *Animal*, *Red Speedo*, *Dirt*, *Lungs*, and *The History of Kisses* as well as productions of *2.5 Minute Ride*, *Until the Flood*, *Cry It Out*, *Translations*, *Curve of Departure*, *The Effect*, *Wig Out!*, *Straight White Men*, *Cloud 9*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Constellations*, *Jumpers for Goalposts*, *Bad Jews* (twice), *The Apple Family Plays*, *Invisible Man*, *Sucker Punch*, *The Golden Dragon*, and *The New Electric Ballroom*, among others. Prior to joining Studio, she spent eight seasons at the Actors Theatre of Louisville, where she headed the literary department and coordinated project scouting, selection, and development for the Humana Festival of New American Plays. She is the co-editor of eight anthologies of plays from Actors Theatre and editor of 10 editions of plays through Studio. Adrien-Alice holds an MFA from the Yale School of Drama.

Jada Boggs (Assistant Director) is a multimedia artist, producer, and director. She is a recent graduate from Ithaca College and joined Studio Theatre as an Artistic Apprentice for the 2021-2022 season. Her most recent directing credit is *Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again.* at Ithaca College. Her recent Assistant Director credits include *August: Osage County* and *You Can't Take It with You* at Hangar Theatre, as well as *Antigone Project* at Ithaca College. jadaboggs.com.

Leigh Wilson Smiley (Dialect Coach) has been on the artistic teams as a voice/dialect/text director for numerous shows produced at Studio Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, Everyman Theatre, Round House Theatre, Ford's Theatre, Arena Stage, The Kennedy Center, Folger Theatre, Shakespeare & Company, NBC on-camera talent, and Cirque du Soleil. Smiley created the Visual Accent and Dialect Archive, a web-based resource for dialect and accent samples. She is a member of Actors Equity Association, Screen Actors Guild, American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, and the Voice and Speech Trainers Association. LeighSmileyVoice.com and VisualAccentDialectArchive.com.

Lücién Reubens (Production Assistant) is a queer actor, technician, activist, art maker, and creator. They served as the production assistant on Studio's 2021 productions of *Cock*, *Until the Flood*, and *2.5 Minute Ride*. They have worked on lights for *Doubt* and *Pipeline* at Studio and *The Bodyguard* at Toby's Dinner Theatre, and worked in sound for *A Sign of Rain* at Studio, Disney's *Newsies* at Arena Stage, and Arbat's *Bremenskie Muzikanty* at the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre. They began working in professional theatre at Olney Theatre Center, assisting with lighting for the regional premieres of *Elf the Musical*, *Once*, *Matilda*, and *Tiger Style!*, as well as the North American premieres of *Labour of Love*, *Oil*, and *Mary Stuart*. Lücién graduated with a BFA in Theater from Colgate University. On Instagram and Twitter at [@lavinpoetry](https://www.instagram.com/livinpoetry).

INFORMATION

Available to stream from studiotheatre.org on-demand from May 21 – June 13, 2021

Single tickets: \$37, plus service fees

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.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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