

PRESS RELEASE

STUDIO
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STUDIO THEATRE PRESENTS NATSU ONODA POWER'S *OKINAWA DEMO REEL*, A VIDEO PROJECT DOCUMENTING THE CREATION OF AN EMERGING THEATRE PIECE ABOUT OCCUPATION, MILITARIZATION, AND PROTEST

When DC-based playwright and Georgetown University professor **Natsu Onoda Power** traveled to Okinawa, Japan in 2020, she expected to spend Spring Break doing research for her latest play, *Crank Session Okinawa*, which she was planning to further develop at Studio Theatre. But her trip fatefully coincided with Coronavirus gripping the world, changing her travel plans and the direction of her project. *Okinawa Demo Reel* is a five-part video project that chronicles the creation of Natsu's emerging theatrical work, the ideas she plans to integrate into the final product, and her devised Zoom-based development process with dramaturg **Soyica Colbert**. The project is part documentary, part theatre, a voyeuristic look into a playwright's creative process, and "something else entirely," Natsu explains.

The **first video in the *Okinawa Demo Reel* series**—called *Taco Rice*—is now available to view on Studio Theatre's [YouTube](#) page. A combination cooking tutorial and history lesson, *Taco Rice* establishes the connection between the United States and Okinawa. New videos will be released throughout the winter.

"Natsu has been a Studio collaborator and personal friend for years. She's directed here three times, she's a member of the Studio Cabinet, and her work is always pushing the edges of visual storytelling. We'd planned an in-person workshop of her work in June, and now that she's reconceived this process to develop her work online, I'm thrilled to open her process up to more people," said Studio Artistic Director **David Muse**.

With *Crank Session Okinawa*, Natsu set out to create her latest play, an exploration of cross-cultural exchange with a convergence of 1970s go-go, Okinawan, and Japanese music. When travel interruptions left her stranded in Okinawa for weeks, she participated in several nonviolent protests against the expansion of a United States military base on the island. This experience shifted the play's focus from music to militarized occupation and the Okinawans' responses to it.

Natsu and Soyica are now developing the piece over the next five months, putting out short videos in the *Okinawa Demo Reel* series to test ideas and share elements of the play as it takes shape. "A charcoal sketch as opposed to an oil painting," Natsu explains.

ABOUT THE COLLABORATORS

Natsu Onoda Power specializes in adapting non-dramatic texts into new works of visual theater, but sometimes also directs plays and designs sets. Original works (writing/ adapting/ directing) include *Thumbelina* at Imagination Stage; *The Lathe of Heaven* at Spooky Action Theater; *Alice in Wonderland* with National Players; *Wind Me Up, Maria!: A Go-go Musical* at Georgetown University; *Astro Boy and*

the God of Comics at the Studio Theatre and Company One Theatre (Boston, MA). Other directing credits include Provincetown Tennessee Williams Festival; Olney Theatre Center; Studio Theatre; Baltimore Center Stage; Mosaic Theater, and Theater J. She is the recipient of two Elliot Norton Awards (for Outstanding Direction and Production Design) and two Helen Hayes Awards (Outstanding New Adaptation and Outstanding Set Design), as well as a DC Commission on the Arts fellowship. Onoda Power holds a PhD from Northwestern University, and is the author of *God of Comics: Osamu Tezuka and the Creation of Post-World War II Manga* (The University Press of Mississippi, 2009).

She is a Professor of Theater and Performance Studies at Georgetown University.

Soyica Colbert is the Vice Dean of Faculty and Idol Family Professor of African American and Theater and Performance Studies at Georgetown University. She is also an Associate Director at the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, DC. Colbert is the author of *The African American Theatrical Body: Reception, Performance and the Stage* and *Black Movements: Performance and Cultural Politics*. Colbert edited the Black Performance special issue of *African American Review* and co-edited *The Psychic Hold of Slavery and Race and Performance After Repetition*. She is currently completing a book project, *Radical Vision: A Biography of Lorraine Hansberry* (forthcoming from Yale University Press in March 2021).

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 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. 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.

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