

PRESS RELEASE

STUDIO
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OPEN STUDIO UPDATE: STUDIO THEATRE BREAKS GROUND ON \$20 MILLION RENOVATION, ANNOUNCES NEW VICTOR SHARGAI THEATRE AND CAFÉ PARTNER, RĀKO COFFEE ROASTERS

In late March, **Studio Theatre broke ground on Open Studio, a transformational \$20 million investment** in the Theatre's future. The three-pronged capital campaign will **enhance artistic innovation at Studio, invest in community engagement, and increase operational efficiency** for its four-theatre complex at 14th and P Streets NW in Logan Circle. Announced in 2020 and delayed by nearly a year by the coronavirus pandemic, Studio is taking advantage of this time when the Theatre is dark to complete major renovations and open anew in its 2021-2022 season, ready to receive audiences when it is safe to gather in person again. Renovations will be complete by early 2022. More information about the campaign is available at openstudiocampaign.org.

A focal point of the Open Studio campaign is the complete reengineering of Studio's largest theatre on the ground floor. Following renovations, it will reopen as the **Victor Shargai Theatre**, renamed to commemorate Studio's former board member and a fervent champion of DC theatre. The theatre will adjoin more open public space and a first floor lounge, furnished through a partnership with **Design Within Reach**, which is also outfitting the entire building and whose modern furniture and design will elevate Studio's new streamlined aesthetic and industrial architecture.

Additionally, **RĀKO Coffee Roasters** will join Studio as its café partner, fulfilling a key Open Studio objective to create a more welcoming, public-facing presence for the Logan Circle neighborhood and surrounding community. The woman-owned company founded by sisters Lisa and Melissa Gerben focuses on sustainably sourced, locally roasted, single-origin coffees. RĀKO will also manage concessions for Studio.

"The last year has felt like a suspended reality for those working in theatre. But we're slowly emerging, first with the launch of our all-digital season and now with real momentum for Open Studio. Our building is changing in dramatic ways that will invite new artistic possibilities and make it even more exciting to welcome audiences back," said Artistic Director **David Muse**. "It's heartening that at the end of this year of unpredictability and tumult for our field, that Studio will open its doors on a new chapter and fresh start."

"Open Studio is an opportunity to welcome the community into our building in a way that's never been possible before. This renovation will allow us to keep our doors open and invite people in to use our lobbies as a neighborhood gathering space. We're thrilled to have an around the clock presence with a growing business like RĀKO Coffee Roasters and are honored to give them their first home in DC as part of our partnership," said Managing Director **Rebecca Ende Lichtenberg**.

Studio has occupied space at 14th and P Streets NW, now one of Washington, DC's busiest nightlife corridors, since 1978. The complex was last renovated in 2004, when Studio expanded into two adjacent buildings and added two theatre spaces.

Partners on the project are architects Hickok Cole, theatrical and acoustic consultants Charcoalblue, builder Forrester Construction, and project managers JM Zell Partners. The project is being financed by Sandy Spring Bank.

The Open Studio campaign is supported by significant contributions from Marc Albert and Stephen Tschida, Susan and Dixon Butler, the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Events DC, Sari Hornstein, Arlene and Robert Kogod, Albert Lauber and Craig Hoffman, The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, Teresa and Dan Schwartz, Share Fund, and Amy Weinberg and Norbert Hornstein.

The Victor Shargai Theatre and improved infrastructure

The renamed and completely re-envisioned Victor Shargai Theatre will harness the boundless creative possibilities, versatility, and excitement of Studio's Stage 4, bringing it down to the first floor in a space that is larger, highly visible, and more easily accessible. Formerly the Metheny Theatre, the new Victor Shargai Theatre will be capable of myriad configurations, from thrust to end-stage, in the round, cabaret, and traverse, creating a completely customizable experience tailored to individual productions. Seating capacity will increase to approximately 215 people, depending on configuration, and more than 300 people standing—nearly double the capacity of Stage 4 and more aligned with Studio's other theatre spaces.

Outdated production technology and theatre infrastructure will be brought up to date, including a new full tension wire grid to support new lighting, sound, and projection technology; much-needed audiovisual improvements; and improved acoustical separation—both from outside the building and between the theaters themselves.

The renovation further ensures long-term stability by improving systems and infrastructure throughout the building that have not been modernized in over 15 years. Currently failing HVAC systems will be upgraded, so that they operate silently and efficiently in Studio's intimate theatre spaces. Changes like upgrading the electrical infrastructure to run LED lighting and replacing bathroom fixtures with those that restrict water usage will also improve the operating efficiencies of Studio's historic buildings, reducing environmental impact and annual expenses.

RĀKO Coffee Roasters

Virginia-based RĀKO Coffee Roasters will operate a 1,100 square foot café in what is currently the Mead Bar and lobby area, on the first floor of the Theatre with direct access to P Street NW. RĀKO's presence will extend outside to a 66-seat patio. The company will also operate concessions for Studio.

The day-to-night concept will serve rotating single origin pour overs and unique handcrafted espresso-based drinks by day, and natural wines, craft beer, and bespoke cocktails by night, as well as a seasonally rotating food program sourced from local women, BIPOC, and zero-waste focused specialty food makers. The design of the cafe will be an extension of RĀKO's creative collaborations to date, with visual art, metalwork, and millwork being sourced locally.

Currently based in Lorton, Virginia, RĀKO operates from a 5,000 square foot state of the art coffee roasting facility featuring the most environmentally friendly roasting equipment available—a Loring™ S35 Kestrel and S15 Falcon. RĀKO specializes in high quality, single origin coffees, advanced brewing methods, creative collaborations, and inspired cafes. By importing a majority of its coffee directly from their farmer-suppliers, the RĀKO team invests in the economic empowerment of small coffee growers and their communities. Additionally, RĀKO is a proud supporter of the International Women’s Coffee Alliance, empowering women in the coffee industry around the world.

Exterior refresh and expanded Public Spaces

While Studio’s mission calls out the importance of fostering a more connected community, the Theatre’s current fortress-like exterior and rarely activated public spaces present a barrier to deeper engagement. Seeking a more welcoming and inviting visitor experience, Studio will make significant changes to the façade of its building, as well as its public spaces.

Renovations will visually unite the three buildings that comprise Studio’s complex and create a branded street presence featuring a revamped entrance on 14th Street, sporting a bright yellow paint treatment and large marquee sign. An 18-foot-high blade sign at the corner of 14th and P Streets NW will also be added to aid with wayfinding, in addition to new street-level poster windows to showcase the work of the theatre, and a mural depicting Studio’s artistic history.

The Box Office will relocate to just inside the Theatre’s new main entrance, allowing guests to locate patron and ticketing services more easily. Also serving as a concierge desk, the new Box Office will ensure that visitors can easily find help, ask questions, and navigate the building.

Lobby spaces will be refreshed, embracing the openness of the building’s original industrial architecture. A new, dedicated public lounge will be added to the first floor, furnished by Design Within Reach, and gender-inclusive restrooms will be added to the building.

Changes made to the building, both in its artistic and public spaces, will showcase and enhance its rich history and materiality. Bare ceilings will show cement slabs and pipes overhead; historical factory windows will be preserved; firebrick will be uncovered; and the building’s underpinnings and I-beams will be visible, in a nod to its past.

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, engagement, 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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