

PRESS RELEASE

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CASTING SET FOR STUDIO THEATRE'S DC PREMIERE OF *PASS OVER* BY ANTOINETTE NWANDU; PRODUCTION TO INCLUDE 5-SITE COMMUNITY TOUR

Pass Over

Written by **Antoinette Nwandu**

Directed by **Psalmayene 24**

March 4 – April 5, 2020

Press performance: March 8, 2020 at 2pm

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

Studio Theatre is pleased to announce the cast and creative team for the DC premiere of *Pass Over*, playwright **Antoinette Nwandu**'s incisive examination of race and cyclical violence in America. The production runs **March 4-April 5, 2020** and will be directed by **Psalmayene 24**. Starring are **Christopher Lovell** as Moses and **Jalen Gilbert** as Kitch, two men stuck on a street corner, dreaming about what their lives will be when they get off the block. They are joined by **Cary Donaldson** as Mister and Ossifer, white men who disrupt their flow and bring the threat of violence.

In *Pass Over*, Antoinette Nwandu weaves together Samuel Beckett's absurdist tragicomedy *Waiting for Godot*, the Exodus saga, and the liturgy of the Black church. Nwandu was also inspired by the friendship between two of her male students at Manhattan Borough Community College and the 2012 death of Trayvon Martin.

“*Pass Over* is an ambitious layering of myth, history, and the contemporary, nodding to cultural and literary touchstones but grounded in the present,” said Studio's Artistic Director **David Muse**. “Antoinette has crafted a playful and haunting look at the many times young Black men have been told to wait and the violence they face regardless of their patience.”

About the *Pass Over* Community Tour

In addition to performances in the Metheny Theatre, Studio is presenting the *Pass Over* Community Tour, which will take a complete dramatic reading of the play to intergenerational audiences throughout the DC-metro area. Facilitated talkbacks will accompany the reading to help audiences process the play and explore the context of Nwandu's work with more depth. The *Pass Over* Community Tour will visit:

- Duke Ellington School of the Arts (3500 R Street NW)—April 1, 2020 at 8pm
- Howard University's Environmental Theatre Space (2455 6th Street NW)—April 8, 2020 at 11am and 7pm

- Anacostia Neighborhood Library (1800 Good Hope Road SE)—April 15, 2020 at 6:30pm
- Shaw Neighborhood Library (1630 7th Street NW)—April 16, 2020 at 6:30pm
- Joe’s Movement Emporium (3309 Bunker Hill Road, Mount Rainier, MD)—April 18, 2020 at 2pm and 8pm

About *Pass Over*

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, Antoinette Nwandu’s collision of the Exodus saga and *Waiting for Godot* probes the forces that have marooned these young Black men in a cycle of violence, as they yearn for the promised land.

About Antoinette Nwandu

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 Theatre production, directed by Spike Lee, premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival and at SXSW, and is currently streaming on Amazon Prime. Victory Gardens Theater 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 National 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, Page 73, PlayPenn, Southern Rep Theatre, The Flea Theater, Naked Angels, The Fire This Time Festival, and The Movement Theatre Company. Antoinette has a bachelor’s degree in English, magna cum laude, from Harvard College; a MS from The University of Edinburgh; and a 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.

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

- **Christopher Lovell (Moses)** is a multidisciplinary artist—actor, writer, and musician—from Brooklyn, NY, currently residing in Los Angeles, CA. Most recently his single, *Dear God*, was released on all digital streaming platforms. He holds a BFA in Acting from Syracuse University and a MFA in Acting from the American Repertory Theatre at Harvard University.
- **Jalen Gilbert (Kitch)** is making his Studio Theatre debut in *Pass Over*. He was most recently seen in the world premiere of *The First Deep Breath* at Victory Gardens Theater. His other

credits include *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* at Writers Theatre, *Too Heavy for Your Pocket* at TimeLine Theatre Company, *Mies Julie* at Victory Gardens Theater, and *Hooded, Or Being Black for Dummies* and *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea* at First Floor Theater. Television credits include *Shameless* and *Work in Progress* on Showtime, *Chicago Med* on NBC, and *The Exorcist* on Fox. Films include *Knives and Skin* and *Holiday Heist*. Jalen is a graduate of The Theatre School at DePaul University's BFA Acting program.

- **Cary Donaldson (Mister/Ossifer)** returns to Studio Theatre after appearing in *Translations* in 2018. He has appeared on Broadway in *Straight White Men* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, and Off Broadway in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Merchant of Venice* (The Public Theater's Shakespeare in the Park), *Timon of Athens* (The Public Theater), *The Rivals* and *Major Barbara* (The Pearl Theatre Company), *The Old Boy* (Keen Company), *Hamlet* (Waterwell), and *Romeo and Juliet* (Wheelhouse Theater Company). Regionally, Cary has performed at Williamstown Theatre Festival, The Old Globe, Barrington Stage Company, The Contemporary American Theater Festival, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Pioneer Theatre Company, and Georgia Shakespeare. His television credits include *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, *Blue Bloods*, *Elementary*, and History's *The Men Who Built America*. He received a BA from Wake Forest University and a MFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

About the Creative Team

- **Debra Booth (Set Designer)** has a long history with Studio, where she has designed *White Pearl*, *Translations*, *The Wolves*, *The Father*, *The Hard Problem*, *Constellations*, *The Apple Family Cycle*, *Jumpers for Goalposts*, *Belleville*, *Cock*, *Edgar & Annabel*, *Bachelorette*, *Moonlight*, *Blackbird*, *My Children! My Africa!*, *The Pillowman*, and many others. Her international work includes premiere opera *Marco Polo* (Tan Dun/Martha Clarke) in Munich, Hong Kong, and New York. Regionally, Debra's credits include *Sooner/Later* and *Vicuña & the American Epilogue* at Mosaic Theater Company; *Small Mouth Sounds* at Round House Theatre; *Richard III*, *The Collection*, and *The Lover* at the Shakespeare Theatre Company; *Marisol* at Hartford Stage and The Public Theater; *Trying*, *The Illusion*, and *Happy Days* at Portland Stage; the New York premiere of *Angels in America* at The Juilliard School; *Broken Glass* at Philadelphia Theatre Company (Barrymore Award nomination); and *A Moon for the Misbegotten* at Yale Rep. Debra is the recipient of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities Artist Fellowship and a National Endowment for the Arts design grant. She is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama.
- **Keith Parham (Lighting Designer)** returns to Studio Theatre, where he previously designed *Translations*, *Hand to God*, and *The Father*. He designed *Thérèse Raquin* on Broadway for Roundabout Theatre Company. His Off Broadway credits include *Man From Nebraska* at Second Stage; *The Purple Lights of Joppa Illinois* and *Between Riverside and Crazy* at Atlantic Theater Company; *The Model Apartment* at Primary Stages; *Tribes*, *Mistakes Were Made*, and *Red Light Winter* at Barrow Street Theatre; *Stop the Virgins* with Karen O at St. Ann's Warehouse and Sydney Opera House; *Ivanov* and *Three Sisters* at Classic Stage Company; *A Minister's Wife* at Lincoln Center Theater; and *Adding Machine: A Musical* at Minetta Lane Theatre. Recent regional credits include *Father Comes Home from the Wars*, *The Wolves*, and *Uncle Vanya* at the Goodman Theatre; *Wild Goose Dreams* at La Jolla Playhouse; *Carousel* at Arena Stage; and *The Edge of Our Bodies*, *Gentle*, *Music Hall*, and *The Anyway Cabaret* at TUTA. International work includes *Homebody/Kabul* at the National Theatre in Belgrade, Serbia. He is the recipient of an Obie Award and a Lucille Lortel Award.
- **Brandee Mathies (Costume Designer)** has been Studio's Costume Shop Manager since 1994. He has designed *MotherStruck!*, *This is Our Youth*, *The Year of Magical Thinking*, *Stoop Stories*, *The Rimers of Eldritch*, *A Number*, *The Syringa Tree*, and *Comic Briefs* for Studio Theatre, as well as *Moth*, *Contractions*, *A Beautiful View*, *Crestfall*, and *Polaroid Stories* for Studio

2ndStage. DC-area credits include *Satchmo at the Waldorf, Hooded, Or Being Black for Dummies, Blood Knot, Eureka Day, Shame, Vicuña & the American Epilogue*, and *Inherit the Windbag* at Mosaic Theater Company (Costume Designer); *Black Nativity* and *This Bitter Earth* at Theater Alliance (Costume Designer); *Anything Goes* (Costume Designer) and *Spunk* (Assistant Designer) at Howard University; *The Wiz* at Duke Ellington School of the Arts (Costume Designer); *Blues for an Alabama Sky* and *Sunday in the Park with George* at Arena Stage (First Hand); and *Black Nativity* at The Kennedy Center (Assistant Designer).

- **Megumi Katayama (Sound Designer)** is a sound designer, sound artist, and composer based in New York, NY and is making her Studio Theatre debut with *Pass Over*. Her recent credits include: *For Colored Girls...* at The Public Theater, *Pride and Prejudice* at Long Wharf Theatre, *El Huracán* at Yale Rep/The Sol Project (Connecticut Critics Circle Award Nomination), *Soft* at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, *Sense and Sensibility* at Virginia Stage Company, and *Field Guide* for Rude Mechs/Yale Rep (Associate Sound Designer). Megumi holds a BFA from University of Central Oklahoma and a MFA in Sound Design from the Yale School of Drama.
- **Lauren Halvorsen (Dramaturg)** is in her ninth season as Studio's Associate Literary Director. Her dramaturgy credits here include *Pipeline, Doubt, P.Y.G. or the Mis-Education of Dorian Belle, Admissions, Kings, If I Forget, Vietgone, The Wolves, Skeleton Crew, The Father, Three Sisters, The Hard Problem, Hand to God, Moment, Between Riverside and Crazy, Chimerica, The Wolfe Twins, Belleville, Water by the Spoonful, Tribes, The Real Thing, The Motherfucker with the Hat, The Aliens, Bachelorette, The Big Meal, and Time Stands Still*. Previously, Lauren spent three seasons as Literary Manager of The Alley Theatre. She was the Artistic Associate of the WordBRIDGE Playwrights Laboratory for six years and has worked in various artistic capacities for The Kennedy Center, City Theatre Company, Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, First Person Arts Festival, and The Wilma Theater. Lauren is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College.
- **Autumn J. Mitchell (Stage Manager)** (she/her) is a native of the historic city of Savannah, GA. She is making her Studio Theatre debut with *Pass Over*. Notable management credits include *The Wiz* at the Oregon Shakespeare Theatre; *Fences* and *The Man of Destiny* at the American Players Theatre; *Acis and Galatea* and *Face on the Barroom Floor* at Central City Opera; Lucky Plush Productions' *The Better Half* and *Rink Life* at Steppenwolf Theatre; and Step Afrika!'s *Magical Musical Holiday Step Show* at Atlas Performing Arts Center. Autumn is an alumna of Alabama State University and holds a BA in Theatre with a concentration in Stage Management and Technical Theatre. Along with being a Stage Manager, she champions authentic and positive representation of Black and Brown theatre makers in predominantly white institutions.
- **Tony Thomas (Choreographer)** is an independent artist working in a wide range of entertainment mediums. Local credits include *Native Son* at Mosaic Theater Company, *P.Y.G. or the Mis-Education of Dorian Belle* at Studio Theatre; *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Aida* at Constellation Theatre Company; *The Freshest Snow Whyte* and *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* at Imagination Stage; *Word Becomes Flesh* (2016 Helen Hayes Nominee—Choreography; Helen Hayes Award—Outstanding Production) at Theater Alliance; and *The Shipment* at Forum Theatre. Performance credits include *Black Nativity* (2011 and 2016) at Theater Alliance, *Guys & Dolls* and *A Chorus Line* (2014 Helen Hayes Award Outstanding Musical Production) at Olney Theatre Center, and the *West Side Story* National Tour. He is a part of the creative faculty at Adventure Theatre MTC and Ngoma Center for Dance. As an Interior Architect, Tony Thomas Designs was developed in 2004 as a bi-coastal design practice in residential/hospitality design.
- **Deb Thomas (Props Designer)** is a props and set designer for theatre, television, and film. From 2009 to 2019, she was Studio Theatre's Props Director. Her work at Studio includes *Fun Home, Love-Valor-Compassion, Sylvia, Suburbia, Slavs!* (properties design), and set design for *Terminus*. Freelance work include properties design for *Eureka Day* and *Milk Like Sugar* at

Mosaic Theater Company, *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife* and *Freud's Last Session* at Theater J; sculptor and sculpture consultant for TLC's *DC Cupcakes* (2011-2013); Washington Bureau set design for TV Tokyo; and *Natty G* pilot set design for National Geographic.

- **Mekala Sridhar (Assistant Director)** is a director and producer. Her directing credits include *Salome*, *10708*, and *(re)Move West*. Some of her recent assistant directing credits include *Section 33*, *Light Years Away*, and *What You Are*. In the past, she has worked in the arts engagement and artistic departments of theatre companies like North Coast Repertory Theatre, The Midwives, Blindspot Collective, The Old Globe, and La Jolla Playhouse. Mekala holds a BA in Theatre, Literature, and Psychology from Sarah Lawrence College, and has studied at the Moscow Art Theatre School and Accademia Dell'Arte.
- **Charles Cicchino (Assistant Stage Manager)** previously served as the Assistant Stage Manager of *Pipeline*, *White Pearl*, and *Doubt: A Parable* at Studio Theatre, as well as the Assistant Stage Manager of *The Three Musketeers* at RhinoLeap Productions. His stage management credits include *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Us/Them*, and *Macbeth* from his time at Wake Forest University.

INFORMATION

Where: Studio Theatre's Metheny Theatre, 1501 14th St NW, Washington, DC 20005

Performances: Tuesday-Saturday at 8pm, Saturday and Sunday at 2pm, and Sunday at 7pm

There will be no matinee performance on March 7 or April 11 and no evening performance on March 8, April 1, April 7-10, or April 12.

Tickets: \$60 – \$90

Runs March 4 – April 5, 2020

Press performance: March 8, 2020 at 2pm

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.

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 the box office. 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 the Box Office. Call the Box Office at 202.332.3300 for more information.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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