

PRESS RELEASE

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CASTING SET FOR DOMINIQUE MORISSEAU DRAMA *PIPELINE* AT STUDIO THEATRE

Pipeline

Written by **Dominique Morisseau**
Directed by **Awoye Timpo**
Runs January 15 – February 16, 2020
Press performance: January 19, 2020 at 2pm

“*Pipeline* confirms Dominique Morisseau’s reputation as a playwright of piercing eloquence.”
—*The New York Times*

“An ethically ambiguous drama that raises barbed questions about class, race, parental duty, and the state of American education.”
—*Variety*

Casting is set for Studio Theatre’s production of *Pipeline*, playwright **Dominique Morisseau**’s searing drama about the school-to-prison pipeline and a mother desperately trying to keep her son from becoming ensnared in it. The production runs **January 15-February 16, 2020** and is directed by **Awoye Timpo**. Starring are DC theatre favorite **Justin Weaks** (Studio’s *Curve of Departure*) as high school student Omari and **Andrea Harris Smith** making her Studio debut as his mother, public school teacher Nya. In its recent People Issue, *Washington City Paper*’s called Weaks a “standout,” going on to say: “D.C. theater audiences love Justin Weaks. ... Weaks came to D.C. for a job about four years ago, not expecting to stay. But he kept getting cast in shows, and lucky for local theatergoers, he’s still here.”

Studio is also pleased to welcome **Ro Boddie** (Dun), returning to the Theatre for the fourth time, as well as **Monica Rae Summers Gonzalez** (Jasmine), **Pilar Witherspoon** (Laurie), and **Bjorn DuPaty** (Xavier).

“Dominique Morisseau writes from a place of deep understanding and familiarity, both with the subject matter and people at the center of her plays,” said Studio’s Artistic Director David Muse. “Though it isn’t set in a specific city, it feels close. There is no doubt that our audiences will see DC reflected to some degree in *Pipeline*, which will make their reactions to it all the more interesting. It’s a play that brings both clear-eyed analysis about the damage systemic racism does and deep recognition of literature’s power to reflect and transform lives.”

For *Pipeline*, Morisseau draws on her and her mother’s combined six decades of experience as educators. She was also inspired by Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow*, an explosive examination of how the

American criminal justice system targets Black men, and heavily biased press coverage following the murder of Michael Brown.

Studio first introduced Morisseau to DC audiences with the 2017 production of *Skeleton Crew*. When it premiered at Lincoln Center Theater, *Pipeline* cemented Morisseau as “a playwright of piercing eloquence” (*The New York Times*).

About *Pipeline*

Nya is a single mom and dedicated teacher at a high-poverty city school, determined to give her teenaged son Omari opportunities that her students will never have. When an altercation with a teacher at his private school threatens Omari’s future, Nya has to fight a system that’s against him in any environment. A searing, eloquent, and deeply compassionate look at a broken education system, the moments we are pushed to our limits, and the ferocity of one parent’s love.

About Dominique Morisseau

Dominique Morisseau is the author of *The Detroit Project (A 3-Play Cycle)* which includes *Skeleton Crew* (Atlantic Theater Company), *Paradise Blue* (Signature Theatre), and *Detroit ‘67* (Public Theater, Classical Theatre of Harlem, and the National Black Theatre). Additional plays include *Pipeline* (Lincoln Center Theater), *Sunset Baby* (LAByrinth Theatre), *Blood at the Root* (National Black Theatre), and *Follow Me to Nellie’s* (Premiere Stages). She is also the book writer on the new musical *Ain’t Too Proud – The Life and Times of the Temptations* (Broadway/Berkeley Repertory Theatre). Dominique is an alumna of The Public Theater Emerging Writer’s Group, Women’s Project Lab, and Lark Playwrights Workshop, and has developed work at Sundance Lab, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and the Eugene O’Neill Playwrights Conference. Her work has been commissioned by Steppenwolf Theatre, Women’s Project, South Coast Repertory, People’s Light and Theatre, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival/Penumbra Theatre. She most recently served as Co-Producer on the Showtime series *Shameless*. Awards include: the Spirit of Detroit Award, PoNY Fellowship, Sky-Cooper Prize, TEER Trailblazer Award, Steinberg Playwright Award, Audelco Awards, NBFT August Wilson Playwriting Award, Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama, Obie Award, Ford Foundation Art of Change Fellowship, and being named one of *Variety’s* Women of Impact (2017-2018).

About Awoye Timpo

Awoye Timpo’s Off Broadway directing credits include *Good Grief* (Vineyard Theatre), *The Revolving Cycles Truly and Steadily Roll’d* (The Playwrights Realm), and *The Homecoming Queen* (Atlantic Theater Company). Regionally she has directed *Everybody Black* (Actors Theatre of Louisville) and *Paradise Blue* (Long Wharf Theatre). Additional credits include *Carnaval* (National Black Theater); *Sister Son/ji* (Billie Holiday Theatre); *The Vanished* (site-specific); *Skeleton Crew* (Chester Theatre Company); and *Ndebele Funeral* (59E59, Edinburgh Festival/Summerhall, and South African tour). She is a producer for CLASSIX, a series exploring classic plays by Black playwrights.

ABOUT THE CAST

- **Justin Weaks** (Omari) returns to Studio Theatre after appearing in *Curve of Departure* during the 2017-2018 season. He was most recently seen in *Fences* at Ford’s Theatre. Selected local credits include *BLKS*, *Gloria*, and *Describe the Night* at Woolly Mammoth; *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 holds a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Supporting

Actor and Ensemble (*Word Becomes Flesh* at Theater Alliance) as well as three additional Helen Hayes nominations. He is a teaching artist in the Washington, DC metro area and a company member of the Woolly Mammoth. He earned a BA in Theatre from Greensboro College.

- **Andrea Harris Smith** (Nya) is making her Studio debut with *Pipeline*. Local and Regional credits include *Theory* with Mosaic Theater Company; *Small Mouth Sounds* at Round House Theatre; *Our Town* at Olney Theatre Center; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Pericles*, *Les Blancs*, and *Chicago* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival; *Mules* at Magic Theatre, San Francisco; and *Blues for an Alabama Sky* at TheatreWorks, Palo Alto, CA. International credits include *Katrina* at Jericho House, London; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, and *Love's Labour's Lost* with The Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-upon-Avon and West End; *To Kill a Mockingbird* at Birmingham Rep/West Yorkshire Playhouse. She also appeared in the film *Last Chance Harvey*. TV credits include *Hamlet* (RSC/BBC), *Doctor Who* (BBC), and *Casualty* (BBC). Andrea holds an MFA from American Conservatory Theater and trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School in the UK.
- **Monica Rae Summers Gonzalez** (Jasmine) makes her Studio Theatre debut with *Pipeline*. New York credits include *The Siblings Play* at Cherry Lane Theatre, *Ten Days in a Mad-House* with Strangemen Theatre Company, *Cost/Benefit* with F*It Club, and *TALLY HO! Navigating the Future* at Theater for the New City. Regional credits include *Scapino* at Gulfshore Playhouse, and *Native Gardens* at Syracuse Stage, Geva Theatre Center, and Portland Center Stage. Television credits include *Orange is the New Black*, *Bull*, and *Shades of Blue*. Monica was nominated for Best Leading Actress in a Play in the 2019 SALT Awards. She holds a BFA in Acting from the Conservatory of Theater Arts at SUNY Purchase College.
- **Pilar Witherspoon** (Laurie)'s international credits include Tsiana in *The Doctor and the Patient* at Theatre Lliure Barcelona and the Rezo Gabriadze Theatre in Tbilisi, Georgia. Broadway credits include *The Father* with Frank Langella at Manhattan Theatre Club. Off-Broadway credits include *Storm Still* at The Sheen Center; *Fighting Words* at Playwrights Horizons/Underwood Theatre; *Beautiful Thing* at Cherry Lane Theatre; *Far and Wide* and *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd* at Mint Theater Company. Select regional credits include *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Henry V* at Shakespeare Theatre Company, Washington, DC; *Twelfth Night* at Alabama Shakespeare Festival; *Other Desert Cities* at the Pittsburgh Public Theater; *All's Well That Ends Well* at PlayMakers Repertory Company; and *Bus Stop* at Baltimore Center Stage. Film credits include *Lust Life* with Bill Irwin, *Custody*, *The Taking of Beslan*, *Ten Stories Tall*, and *Warlord*. Television credits include *Lincoln*, *Instinct*, *Sneaky Pete*, *The Good Wife*, *Blue Bloods*, *The Big C*, *Law & Order*, *Law & Order SVU*, and *Third Watch*. Pilar is a recipient of the Fox Fellowship from the William & Eva Fox Foundation and is a graduate of The Juilliard School.
- **Ro Boddie** (Dun) is returning to Studio Theatre for the fourth time in *Pipeline*. Off Broadway credits include *Socrates* at The Public Theater, *Appomattox* at 59E59 Theaters, and *A Play is a Poem* at Atlantic Theater Company (beginning May 2020). Select regional credits include *A Play is a Poem* at the Mark Taper Forum; *Blueprints to Freedom* at La Jolla Playhouse; *Skeleton Crew* at The Old Globe; *The Mountaintop* at Cleveland Play House; *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* at Baltimore Center Stage; *The Whipping Man* at Milwaukee Repertory Theater; and *Dirt*, *Three Sisters*, and *No Sisters* at Studio Theatre. Television credits include *The Good Wife*, *Elementary*, *Person of*

Interest, and *Unforgettable*. Ro is an alumnus of the University of the North Carolina School of the Arts.

- **Bjorn DuPaty** (Xavier)'s New York credits include *Mlima's Tale* at The Public Theater, *Two Mile Hollow* with Women's Project Theater, *Carnival* with the National Black Theater. National Tour credits include *Julius Caesar* and *Comedy of Errors* with The Acting Company. Regional credits include *Mud Row* with People's Light, *Fairfield* at the Cleveland Play House, *Do You Feel Anger* in the Humana Festival at the Actors Theatre of Louisville, *A Raisin in the Sun* at the Crossroads Theatre Company, and *Clybourne Park* at the Pittsburgh Public Theater. His film and television credits include *Demolition*, *Alpha House*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *The Blacklist*, *Person of Interest*, *Zero Hour*, and *All My Children*. Bjorn holds an MFA from the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University.

ABOUT THE CREATIVE TEAM

- **Arnulfo Maldonado** (Scenic Design) is making his Studio Theatre debut with *Pipeline*. Off Broadway credits include *Power Strip* and *The Rolling Stone* with Lincoln Center Theater, *Sugar in Our Wounds* (Lucille Lortel Award) with Manhattan Theatre Club, *School Girls...* and *Charm* with MCC Theater, *A Strange Loop* and *Dance Nation* with Playwrights Horizons, *Usual Girls* with Roundabout Theatre Company, *The Underlying Chris* with Second Stage, and *Fires in the Mirror* with Signature Theatre. Regional design credits include Alley Theatre, Berkeley Rep, Baltimore Center Stage, Dallas Theater Center, Guthrie Theater, the Humana Festival, Long Wharf Theatre, Old Globe, Two River Theater, and the Williamstown Theatre Festival. Tour credits include *The Magnetic Fields: 50 Song Memoir* (BAM Next Wave, International). Arnulfo is a Clubbed Thumb Affiliated Artist, a recipient of a Princess Grace Fabergé Theater Award, and a multiple Henry Hewes Design nominee. He holds an MFA in Set/Costume design from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.
- **Sarita Fellows** (Costume Designer) makes her Studio Theatre debut with *Pipeline*. Her selected credits include *A Bright Room Called Day* with The Public Theater; *Native Son* with The Acting Company; *Original Sound* with Cherry Lane Theater; *Hatef**k* with the Women's Project; *Macbeth*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Measure for Measure* with the Classical Theatre; *A Chronicle of the Death of Two Worlds* with New York Theater Workshop; *Fur*, *MUD*, *Prospect*, and *Fabuloso!* with Boundless Theater Company; and *Paradise Blue*, *Forbidden City*, *Golden Boy*, and *Hoodoo Love* at Juilliard. Her regional credits include *Top Girls* and *Her Portmanteau* at ACT Theatre; *The Royale* at the Arizona Theater Company; *Ain't Misbehavin'* at the Signature Theatre; *School Girls...* with the Pittsburgh Public Theater; *Haunted Life* at Merrimack Repertory Theatre; *Two Trains Running* at the Weston Playhouse; *Berta* and *A Late Morning with Reagan* at Contemporary American Theater Festival; *Having Our Say* with the Philadelphia Theatre Company. Her Film/TV credits include, *Sight Pictures*, *Everybody Dies*, *Afronauts* (by Frances Bodomo, premiere SWSX 2016); and *Dirt* (by Darius Clark Monroe, premiere Sundance 2016). Sarita is a Lecturer at Princeton University and an Associate Professor at NYU @ Playwrights. She holds an MFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.
- **Jesse Belsky** (Lighting Designer) previously designed *P.Y.G. or The Mis-Education of Dorian Belle*, *The Remains*, *The Effect*, *Three Sisters*, *No Sisters*, and *Animal* at Studio Theatre. Regional credits include *The Magic Play* at Portland Center Stage, Syracuse Stage, and Actors Theatre of Louisville; *Lydia* and *Rough Crossing* at Yale Repertory Theatre; and *The Year of Magical Thinking* at PlayMakers Repertory Company. DC designs include *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* at Ford's Theatre; *J.Q.A.* and *The Year of Magical Thinking* at Arena Stage; *Oslo*, *Handbagged*, and *Book of Will* at Round House Theatre; *The Mystery of Love & Sex* at Signature Theatre; *Henry IV Pt 1*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Sense & Sensibility*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Folger Theatre; *Labour of Love*, *The Invisible Hand*, and *The Magic Play* at Olney Theatre

Center. Jesse holds a BA from Duke University and an MFA from the Yale School of Drama. He has taught lighting design at Connecticut College and UNC Greensboro.

- **Fan Zhang** (Sound Designer) makes her Studio Theatre debut with *Pipeline*. Select Off Broadway credits include *Paris* (Atlantic Theater), *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord* (Second Stage & WP Theater), *Pumpgirl* (Irish Repertory Theatre), *Suicide Forest* (Ma-Yi Theater Company), *Molly Sweeney* (Theatre Row), *Round Table* (59E59), *Behind the Sheet* (Ensemble Studio Theatre), *The Trail of the Catonsville Nine* (Transport Group), *Scissoring* (INTAR), *Beautiful Day Without You* (West End Theatre), *Three Girls Never Learnt the Way Home* (Cherry Lane Theatre), *Tania In the Gateway Van* (New Georges), *The Mecca's Tale* (The Sheen Center), and *Interstate* (New York Musical Festival). Regional credits include *Yasmina's Necklace* (Premiere Stages), *Seven Guitars* (Yale Rep), *Redeem* (Cincinnati Ballet), *Revolutionist* (Pittsburgh City Theatre), *Red Maple* (Capital Rep). Training: MFA, Yale School of Drama
- **Kelly Colburn** (Projections Designer) is a DC-based freelance interdisciplinary artist working as a director and projections and multimedia designer. Select design credits include *P.Y.G. or The Mis-Education of Dorian Belle*, *The Hard Problem* and *If I Forget* with Studio Theatre; *Small Mouth Sounds* with Round House Theatre; *The Invisible Boy* with Children's Theatre of Charlotte; The 2019 Shakespeare Theatre Gala with Shakespeare Theatre Company; *The Fantasticks* with Infinity Theatre Company; *Kiss* with Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company; *Blood at the Root* with Theater Alliance; *Of Equal Place* with Dance Exchange; and *The Royale* at Olney Theatre Center. Kelly was a 2017-2018 NextLOOK Resident Artist and a recipient of the 2018 Jim Henson Puppetry Grant. She holds a BFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts (2011) and an MFA from the University of Maryland (2018).
- **Lauren Halvorsen** (Dramaturg) is in her ninth season as Studio's Associate Literary Director. Her dramaturgy credits include *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.
- **Marielle Burt** (Assistant Director) is a director, choreographer, and playwright. Her recent directing credits include *The Wolves*, *Helens of Troy New York*, and *Psychopsychotic* at Brown University. Marielle has previously worked in the artistic departments of Trinity Repertory Company, the New York International Fringe Festival, and Nightdrive theatre company. She recently graduated from Brown University with a BA in Gender Studies and Literature. Marielle also studied directing at The National Theatre Institute at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center and devised/avant-garde performance at Bard College Berlin.
- **Charles Cicchino** (Assistant Stage Manager) previously served as the Assistant Stage Manager of *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 Mead 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 January 18 and no evening performance on January 19.

Tickets: \$60 – \$90

Runs January 15 – February 16, 2020

Press performance: January 19, 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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