

PRESS RELEASE

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PSALM'S SALONS WELCOMES HIP-HOP THEATRE PIONEERS WILL POWER, DANNY HOCH, AND JONZI D FOR SEPTEMBER VIRTUAL EVENT

Studio Theatre's series of digital dance parties with conversation will feature its first out-of-town guests when host **Psalmayene 24** is joined by theatre artists **Will Power**, **Danny Hoch**, and **Jonzi D** for the next edition of **Psalm's Salons**, streaming live on **September 18 at 5 p.m.** The trio are lauded as innovators and progenitors of hip-hop theatre. Jonzi D has been instrumental in shaping the UK hip-hop dance and theatre scene for more than three decades and Power has been called "the best verse playwright in America" (*New York Magazine*), while celebrated *Hamilton* creator and star Lin-Manuel Miranda has praised Hoch as "The Osiris of Hip-Hop Theater."

As with all Psalm's Salons, the virtual event will pair the personal with the topical, as Psalmayene 24 guides conversation to help contextualizes events in the news cycle through a creative lens. The panel will also discuss the evolution and public embrace of their artform, its power in this moment, and their experience innovating within theatre, as well as their careers and projects.

Events are free and streamed live on Studio Theatre's [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) pages.

Psalm's Salons are an online gathering space to highlight the work of creatives, signal-boost local and Black-owned businesses, kick back to live music, and promote a sense of community. Each broadcast, **DJ Nick tha 1da** spins live music, sampling from the Library of Congress Citizen DJ tool.

"When I found out Will, Danny, and Jonzi were confirmed for the same episode, I was ecstatic. These three men are on the Mount Rushmore of hip-hop theatre. They are pioneers of the form and founding fathers of the genre," said host **Psalmayene 24**. "They all epitomize the type of guest this salon is intended to feature: highly charismatic, brilliant, and socially conscious artists who bring immeasurable value to theatre worldwide."

"Psalm's past salons have already shifted the depth and variety of conversations we're having around aesthetics and community," said Studio's Artistic Director **David Muse**. "I look forward to our upcoming conversation about the legacy and present moment of hip-hop theatre—a complex and ever-shifting form that has touched so much of American theatremaking over the past 30-plus years."

Psalm's Salons are supported by a capacity building grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's (DDCF) Building Demand for the Arts program. The program funds artists and arts institutions working to forge long-lasting relationships with diverse audiences. Studio, working with Psalm, has committed to expand on its efforts to forge meaningful connections with African American millennial audiences in DC. The grant funds engagement efforts through the 2020-2021 season.

DDCF's Building Demand for the Arts program supports organizations and artists in joint efforts to ignite interest and engagement in jazz, theatre, and contemporary dance. This program is predicated on the beliefs that artists are key connectors to communities, and that artists and organizations can work together in imaginative new ways to attract and engage audiences. These grants also promote deeper partnerships, longer relationships, and new kinds of conversation and cooperation between organizations and artists.

About the Artists

Psalmayene 24 (host) 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).

Nick "tha 1da" Hernandez's (DJ/Sound Design) recent work includes: *The Hip-Hop Children's Trilogy* with playwright Psalmayene 24 (Imagination Stage); *Fences* (Ford's Theatre); *Native Son* and *Les Deux Noir* (Mosaic Theater); *Word Becomes Flesh* (Helen Hayes Award, Outstanding Production) at Theater Alliance; *Long Way Down* and *Darius & Twig* (Kennedy Center); and *Havana Hop* and *All the Way Live* with sibling Paige Hernandez (Discovery Theater). Additionally, Nick has produced for Hot 97 FM, Red Bull Big Tune, Netflix, DC Public Library system, and Smithsonian Associates.

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 (New York), The Public Theater (New York), The Battersea Arts Centre (London), 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 known as one of the pioneers and co-creators of hip-hop theater, a late 20th Century art form 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. His straight play, *Fetch Clay, Make Man*, has been produced in dozens of LORT theaters and regional companies, including the McCarter Theatre Center, New York Theatre Workshop, Round House Theatre, True Colors Theatre, The Ensemble Theater, and Marin Theatre Company. Other plays include *Stagger Lee* (Dallas Theatre Center), *The Seven* (La Jolla Playhouse, New York Theatre Workshop, Ten Thousand Things Theater), *Seize the King* (La Jolla Playhouse, Alliance Theatre), and *Detroit Red* (Arts Emerson). He is also the writer of children's theatre pieces including *Five Fingers of Funk* (Children's Theatre Company) and *Honey Bo and the Goldmine* (La Jolla Playhouse). Power's collaboration with Anne Bogart's SITI Company and composer Julia Wolfe resulted in the performance piece *Steel Hammer* (Humana Festival, UCLA Live, Brooklyn Academy of Music, plus World tour).

Power has received numerous awards for his work as a writer and performer in the field including 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 (Outstanding New Script, *Detroit Red*).

Power is also a passionate teacher of writing and performance. He has held fellowships, residencies and faculty positions at the City College of New York, Princeton University, Wayne State University, The

University of Michigan at Flint, the University of Massachusetts (Amherst), and Spelman College (Atlanta). Currently, Power is a professor of theatre at Occidental College in Los Angeles, CA.

Danny Hoch is a writer and actor whose plays have toured the US and the world garnering many awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship for Drama, two OBIE Awards, Sundance Playwriting and Screenwriting Fellowships, and the CalArts/Alpert Award In Theatre. He was named a USA Ford Fellow for his contributions to the American Theatre. His writing has appeared in *The Village Voice*, *New York Times*, *Harper's*, *The Nation*, *American Theatre*, and various books: *Out Of Character*, *Extreme Exposure*, *Total Chaos* and his own *Jails, Hospitals & Hip-Hop* by Villard/Random House. His writing and acting credits for TV and film include *The Knick*, *Maniac*, *Nurse Jackie*, *Blue Bloods*, *Law & Order*, *The Good Wife*, *Blackhawk Down*, *War Of The Worlds*, *Lucky You*, *We Own the Knight*, *Bamboozled*, *BlackKkklanman*, *She's Gotta Have It*, *Prison Song*, *Some People*, *Subway Stories*, *Thin Red Line*, *Ted*, *Home*, *Whiteboys*, and *Henry's Crime*. In 2000, Mr. Hoch founded the Hip-Hop Theater Festival which has presented scores of hip-hop Generation plays from around the globe for two decades.

MC, dancer, poet, theatre director, and event promoter, **Jonzi D** has been at the forefront of the UK hip-hop dance and theatre scene for the last three decades. Since founding Breakin' Convention in 2004 Jonzi has triumphed in raising the profile and creating a platform to hip-hop disciplines, which has gained worldwide recognition as being at the vanguard of the development of the genre. Through professional development projects Open Art Surgery and Back to the Lab, Jonzi has supported hundreds of hip-hop dance and rap/poetry artists on their journey to creating theatre.

His critically-acclaimed works include 1995's *Lyrikal Fearta*, 1999's *Aeroplane Man*, 2006's *TAG... Just Writing My Name*, 2009's *Markus the Sadist*, and 2013's *The Letter: To Be Or To MBE?* Jonzi's has been featured in HBO's Def Poetry Jam, had his short films *Silence da Bitchin'* and *Aeroplane Man* screened on Channel 4. He directed the short film *Our Bodies Back* in 2020 and received critical acclaim for this powerful choreopoem featuring poet Jessica Care Moore. Jonzi has toured his work extensively all over the world and delivered his own TED Talk about the influence and evolution of hip-hop culture.

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.

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