

PRESS RELEASE

STUDIO
THEATRE

1501 14TH ST NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20005

202.232.7267
STUDIOTHEATRE.ORG

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
DAVID MUSE

CONTACT:

Mike Fila
202.232.7267 x615
mfila@studiotheatre.org

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STUDIO THEATRE LAUNCHES VIRTUAL "PSALM'S SALONS AT STUDIO" WITH DC-BASED DIRECTOR, THEATRE-MAKER, ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PSALMAYENE 24

Studio Theatre, in collaboration with Studio Artist-in-Residence **Psalmayene 24**, is launching a three-part series of digital dance parties with conversation—**Psalm's Salons at Studio**—beginning **June 25 at 5 p.m.** The virtual salons are an online gathering space to highlight the work of Black creatives, signal boost local and Black-owned businesses, kick back to live music, and promote a sense of community. Salons will be hosted by Psalmayene 24 with original music from **DJ Nick tha 1da**, sampling from the Library of Congress's Citizen DJ tool, and a rotating panel of guests. Events in the series are free to view and will be streamed live on Studio Theatre's [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) pages.

The first guest on Psalm's Salons is playwright **James Ijames**. The Philadelphia-based, Studio-commissioned artist was last in DC for a reading of his play-in-development, *Good Bones*, for the Theatre's Studio R&D: Works in Process series. The two Black theatre artists will discuss their careers, artistic inspirations, and the role of theatre during this moment of racial unrest. During the rapid-fire Q&A *Top 5*, Psalm will ask James about his favorite theatre productions, before opening the forum to audience questions. Cocktail recipes and recommendations for local food to enjoy during the salon will be shared on Studio's social media prior to the event so that audience members can join in on the interactive party vibe.

"When we cancelled our production of Antoinette Nwandu's *Pass Over* that Psalm directed, we had to cut off a conversation before it even got started," said Studio's Artistic Director **David Muse**. "As we've reflected together on what space Studio can make to connect in this time of social distancing, Psalm's instinct was that what we need now is to dance, to be together even separately, and to celebrate art and music from some great Black artists. So we'll be inviting people over to our YouTube channel to dance, listen, celebrate, and learn."

"I'm thrilled to be partnering with Studio Theatre for this online salon series during this critical moment in American history. The original intention was to do the salons live at Studio and then have a dance party after each conversation. When the pandemic hit, we obviously had to pivot. While the platform is different, the goal is still the same: brilliant guests, a strong sense of community, and a celebratory vibe. I can't wait to share this experience with Studio's audience," said **Psalmayene 24**.

Upcoming Psalm's Salons are:

- Thursday, June 25 at 5 p.m. with guest, playwright James Ijames
- Thursday, July 23 at 5 p.m. (guest TBA)
- Thursday, August 20 at 5 p.m. (guest TBA)

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 Theater); *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* (The 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.

James Ijames is a Philadelphia-based performer and playwright. His plays have been produced by Flashpoint Theatre Company, Orbiter 3, Theatre Horizon (Philadelphia, PA), The National Black Theatre (New York City), Ally Theatre Company (Washington, DC) and have been developed by PlayPenn New Play Development Conference, The Lark, Playwrights Horizons, Clubbed Thumb, Villanova Theatre, Gulfshore Playhouse, The Wilma Theater, Azuka Theatre, and Victory Gardens. James is the 2011 F. Otto Haas Award for an Emerging Artist recipient, and he also received two Barrymores for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Play for *Superior Donuts* and *Angels in America*, and one Barrymore for Outstanding Direction of a Play for *The Brothers Size* with Simpatico Theatre Company. He is a 2011 Independence Foundation Fellow, a 2015 Pew Fellow for Playwriting, the 2015 winner of the Terrance McNally New Play Award for *WHITE*, recipient of the 2015 Kesselring Prize honorable mentions for *....Miz Martha*, and a 2017 recipient of the Whiting Award. James is the 2018 recipient of the Kesselring Prize for *Kill Move Paradise*. James is a founding member of Orbiter 3, Philadelphia's first playwright producing collective and a mentor for The Foundry. He received a BA in Drama from Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA and a MFA in Acting from Temple University. James is Assistant Professor of Theatre at Villanova University and resides in South Philadelphia.

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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