

PRESS RELEASE

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POWERHOUSE PRODUCER, THEATRE TRAILBLAZER KAMILAH FORBES ANNOUNCED AS FEATURED GUEST ON FINAL 2020 PSALM'S SALON EVENT

Studio Theatre and emcee **Psalmayene 24** will welcome **Kamilah Forbes**, Executive Producer for the legendary Apollo Theater and entertainment industry trailblazer, as the featured guest on the final Psalm's Salon virtual event of the year on **December 17, 2020 at 5 p.m.** Psalm's Salons has distinguished itself as a hybrid talk show and groove session, exploring timely, complex issues in a laidback environment.

A dedicated steward of Black stories and pioneer of hip hop theatre, Kamilah Forbes has become an in-demand director of stage and screen. Her stage adaptation of Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me* was released on HBO earlier this month; it was also just announced that she will produce, with Oprah Winfrey's Harpo Films and Plan B, a film version of Coates's latest bestseller, *The Water Dancer*, for MGM.

Kamilah will discuss her roots in DC as a proud graduate of Howard University, how creatives of color have fueled the city's cultural landscape, her boundary-breaking career and latest projects, as well as how the theatre and entertainment industry landscapes are changing amidst global calls for racial equality.

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

Psalm's Salons began in June 2020 as 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. Psalm breaks the ice with a "mental health drink break" and in a nod to the hip-hop tradition with a theatre twist, guests pick their Top 5 stage productions.

"I'm elated to have my longtime friend, Kamilah Forbes, as the final salon guest for 2020. From her work as a primary architect of the hip-hop theatre movement to being the Executive Producer of the legendary Apollo Theater, Kamilah's revolutionary spirit and magnificent leadership skills have catapulted her to the upper echelons of artistic expression and producing," said emcee **Psalmayene 24**. "I'm looking forward to discussing Kamilah's legendary career and sharing this conversation with Studio's audience."

"It is an honor and thrill to welcome Kamilah Forbes back to DC—albeit virtually," said Studio Artistic Director **David Muse**. "She's a thought leader, community builder, and director whose work resonates with the brain and body. I invite you to share in what is sure to be a fascinating conversation between these artists."

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. His 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.

Kamilah Forbes is an esteemed award-winning director and producer for theatre and television. She currently serves as the Executive Producer at the world-famous Apollo Theater in Harlem. In her diverse body of work, Kamilah is noted for having a strong commitment to the development of creative works by, for, and about the hip-hop generation. An alumna of Howard University, Kamilah has won awards for both directing and producing, including the 2019 National Black Theatre Festival Larry Leon Hamlin Producer Award and an NAACP Image Award.

Kamilah's directing credits include *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* written by Lynn Nottage, *Blood Quilt* written by Katori Hall, and *Sunset Baby* written by Dominique Morrisseau. She has also worked closely with Kenny Leon on *The Wiz Live*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Mountaintop*, and *Stick Fly* on Broadway. She has produced several works for television, most notably the seventh season of the Tony Award and Peabody Award winning series *Russell Simmons presents Def Poetry* on HBO.

A *Root* 100 honoree and Sundance Fellow, her most recent projects include directing the world premiere, tour, and theatrical adaptation of Ta-Nehisi Coates's *New York Times* best-selling novel *Between the World and Me*. In addition to her work at the Apollo Theater, Kamilah is set to direct the Broadway premiere of *Soul Train* alongside Questlove, Dominique Morrisseau, and Camille A. Brown.

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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