

PRESS RELEASE

STUDIO
THEATRE

1501 14TH ST NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20005

202.232.7267
STUDIOTHEATRE.ORG

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
DAVID MUSE

CONTACT:

Mike Fila
Associate Director of Marketing and Communications
mfila@studiotheatre.org

DATE: September 30, 2020

UNIVERSES CO-FOUNDERS MILDRED RUIZ-SAPP, STEVEN SAPP JOIN PSALM'S SALONS TO DISCUSS REVOLUTIONIZING AMERICAN THEATRE

UNIVERSES ensemble theatre company founders **Mildred Ruiz-Sapp** and **Steven Sapp**, will join **Studio Theatre's** digital **Psalm's Salons** series on **October 22, 2020 at 5 p.m.** The unconventional Bronx-based company blends disciplines—theatre, poetry, dance, jazz, hip-hop, politics—and engages writers and performers of color to create their own brand of performance. From the creative environment they foster to the works they present on stage, **UNIVERSES** are committed to engaging charged conversations through performance and elevating BIPOC stories, artists, and social issues. Now in the 25th year of **UNIVERSES**, Mildred and Steven reflect on what's changed, reform in American Theatre, where we go from here, and what their mantra—"The Revolution is LIVE and ONSTAGE"—means in this moment.

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.

"Mildred and Steven, along with the rest of **UNIVERSES**, have been creating at the intersection of poetry, dance, theater, and history for 25 years, creating a rich repertoire that convenes artist and audiences around important conversations, challenging convention. It seems fitting that Psalm would host these visionary artists in our series of virtual salons," said Studio Artistic Director **David Muse**.

"Universe is hands down one of my favorite ensembles. Theatrically savvy and street smart, they create a thrilling blend of popular, rootsy, and high art that generates an irresistible force onstage," said **Psalmayene 24**. "I can't wait to talk with them and hear how they are interpreting these hyper-historical times."

"This is an opportunity to share insights, share stories, and to engage in dialogue with fellow Artist/Activist, our friend Psalmayene 24. We are very excited to take part in this digital conversation," said **Steven Sapp**.

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.

Mildred Ruiz-Sapp (playwright, actor, singer) is a co-founder and core member of UNIVERSES, founded in 1995. Playwriting/acting credits include: *AFRICANTIC*; *AmericUS*; *UNISON*; *PARTY PEOPLE*; *AMERIVILLE*; *The Denver Project*; *One Shot in Lotus Position*; *BLUE SUITE*; *RHYTHMICITY*; *SLANGUAGE*; *THE RIDE*. Acting credits include: *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; *The Comedy of Errors*; *The Unfortunates*; Alfred Jarry's *UBU: Enchained*. Musical Direction includes: *SWOPERA*. She has received awards and maintains affiliations including: 2015 Doris Duke Performing Artist Award (Theatre); Oregon Shakespeare Festival Acting Company since 2012; 2008 US Cultural Ambassador with the US State Department/Jazz at Lincoln Center—Rhythm Road Tour; 2008 TCG Peter Zeisler Award; 2006 Career Advancement Fellowship from the Ford Foundation through Pregones/PRTT; 2002-2004 and 1999-2001 TCG National Theater Artist Residency Program Award; BRIO Awards (Bronx Recognizes its Own); Co-Founder of The Point CDC; Board Member (National Performance Network); Former Board Member (Network of Ensemble Theaters); New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspect; Bard College, BA '92 (Literature/Language). Publications include UNIVERSES' *The Revolution will be Live!* (2020 release, TCG Books); *SLANGUAGE* in *The Fire This Time*; *BLUE SUITE* in *The Goodman Theatre's Festival Latino: Six Plays*; *PARTY PEOPLE* in *The Manifesto Anthology*. She has been featured on the covers of *American Theater* (2004) and *The Source* (2000). She is a member of Dramatists Guild of America and Actors' Equity Association.

Steven Sapp (playwright, actor, director) is a co-founder and member of UNIVERSES, founded in 1995. Playwriting/acting credits include *AFRICANTIC*; *AmericUS*; *UNISON*; *PARTY PEOPLE*; *AMERIVILLE*; *The Denver Project*; *One Shot in Lotus Position*; *BLUE SUITE*; *SLANGUAGE*; *RHYTHMICITY*; *THE RIDE*. Acting credits include *The Comedy of Errors* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival). Directing credits include *Pass Over* by Antoinette Nwandu; *SWOPERA* by Carpetbag Theatre; *Metamorphoses* by Mary Zimmerman; Will Powers' *THE SEVEN*; *THE ARCHITECTURE OF LOSS* (Assistant Director); Alfred Jarry's *UBU: Enchained*. He has received awards and maintains affiliations including: 2015 Doris Duke Performing Artist Award (Theatre); Oregon Shakespeare Festival Acting Company since 2012; 2008 US Cultural Ambassador with the US State Department/Jazz at Lincoln Center—Rhythm Road Tour; 2008 TCG Peter Zeisler Award; 2002 TCG National Directors Award; 2002-2004 and 1999-2001 TCG National Theater Artist Residency Program Award; 1998 and 2002 BRIO Awards (Bronx Recognizes its Own); Van Lier Fellowship with New Dramatists; Co-Founder of The Point CDC; New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspect; Bard College, BA '89 - Theatre. Publications include: UNIVERSES' *The*

Revolution will be Live! (2020 release, TCG Books); *SLANGUAGE* in *The Fire This Time*; *BLUE SUITE* in The Goodman Theatre's Festival Latino: Six Plays; *PARTY PEOPLE* in *The Manifesto Anthology*. He has been featured on the covers of *American Theater* (2004) and *The Source* (2000). He is a member of Actors' Equity Association.

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 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.

###