



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
PRESS CONTACT:
Chris Wren, Director of Marketing
chriswren@mosaictheater.org

**MOSAIC THEATER COMPANY OF DC ANNOUNCES LANDMARK TRILOGY
CELEBRATING EMMETT TILL'S LIFE AND LEGACY FOR SUMMER 2022**

*Ifa Bayeza's THE TILL TRILOGY will launch next season
thanks to major support from the Roy Cockrum Foundation*

WASHINGTON (July 27, 2021) — Mosaic Theater Company of DC is proud to announce the opening production of the 2022-23 season, Ifa Bayeza's long-anticipated three-play cycle, THE TILL TRILOGY, exploring the life, death, and legacy of Emmett Till. Simultaneously epic and intimate, the three plays – *The Ballad of Emmett Till*, on the journey of the boy, *Benevolence*, on the story of his killers and *That Summer in Sumner* on the quest for justice – will be presented in rotating repertory, starting in August and running through November 2022. This world premiere staging of the full cycle, the first time all three plays will be presented together, is made possible by a grant from The Roy Cockrum Foundation.

The lynching of Emmett Till in 1955 became a catalyst for the modern Civil Rights movement and remains a flashpoint in the racial reckoning of this country. “I have always seen the story of Emmett Till as a national allegory, a modern myth of our struggle to come to grips with the terrible legacy of enslavement,” Bayeza said. “The killing of black men and boys has become so frequent and ubiquitous that it is hard to fathom. I am humbled that THE TILL TRILOGY is making its debut at Mosaic Theater Company in the nation's Capital – and hopeful that the inspiration of his extraordinary life will buoy us once again in these difficult times.”

“As theatres come to life across the country, The Roy Cockrum Foundation is honored to support the full world premiere of THE TILL TRILOGY on Mosaic's stage,” Cockrum said. “In the months since theaters went dark, this work's importance has been magnified a thousand-fold. The Foundation wholeheartedly supports this historic project with the fullness that the Emmett Till story demands and deserves. We wish the Mosaic family well as they finally move forward with this important work.”

THE TILL TRILOGY will be directed by Talvin Wilks, who also helmed Penumbra Theatre's acclaimed productions of *The Ballad of Emmett Till* and *Benevolence*. Wilks' and Bayeza's collaboration on the third play, *That Summer in Sumner*, will be a world premiere. “We were all so disappointed when like so many other theatres our production was postponed due to COVID,” said Wilks. “The new date is even more poignant as our premiere coincides with the anniversary of this tragic and epic event – August 28th: the day of Emmett's death, the March on Washington and Barack Obama's acceptance of the nomination for President of the United States. In the worst of times, the triumph of faith and hope. Emmett's arc, like Dr. King's ‘arc of the moral universe, bends toward justice.’”

A month after his fourteenth birthday, a confident Chicago youth, a boy on the threshold of manhood, embarks on a summer trip to Mississippi. His saga changes the course of a nation . . . but what of his own journey? The story of a quest . . . for liberty . . . and . . . life! THE TILL TRILOGY,

Ifa Bayeza's acclaimed, award-winning trio of dramas captures the powerful truths at the heart of the story in a soaring work of music, poetry and theatricality.

In preparation for production, Mosaic has presented a series of streamed and recorded public programming events surrounding the political and social impact of the Emmett Till saga. Guests have included Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Secretary of the Smithsonian Lonnie Bunch, preeminent Brandeis University scholar Isaiah Woodard, who is serving as dramaturg on the production, founder of Busboys and Poets Andy Shallal and Mosaic's Andrew W. Mellon Playwright in Residence Psalmayene 24. All online events can be viewed [here](#).

For more information about THE TILL TRILOGY and upcoming public programs, visit <https://mosaictheater.org/the-till-trilogy>.

| | |
|------------|---|
| Play | THE TILL TRILOGY |
| Dates | August 24, 2022 through November 20, 2022 |
| Box Office | https://sforce.co/3i8IQzK |

###

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT: Ifa Bayeza's critically acclaimed drama *The Ballad of Emmett Till*, received a Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights Conference fellowship and premiered at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago in 2008, winning the Mystery Writers of America Edgar Award for Best Play. *The Ballad* made its West Coast premiere at the Fountain Theatre in Los Angeles in 2010, garnering the Ovation Awards' Best Production; Drama Desk Critics' Circle Award for Best Production; and the *Backstage* Garland Award for Best Playwriting. Acclaimed productions followed with the Houston Ensemble Theatre, Penumbra Theatre and Ion Theatre, earning top honors at the San Diego Critics Circle Craig Noel Awards, including Outstanding Dramatic Production. Bayeza has expanded *The Ballad* into THE TILL TRILOGY, recounting the epic Civil Rights saga now in three distinct dramas. The second play *Benevolence*, which debuted at Penumbra Theatre in 2019, was finalist for the Francesca Primus Prize and ranked "Best in Twin Cities Theatre" by the *Star Tribune*. *That Summer in Sumner* will make its world premiere with the Mosaic production. Other innovative works for the stage include *Homer G & the Rhapsodies in The Fall of Detroit* (Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays Award), *String Theory* and *Bunk Johnson... a blues poem* (commissioned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation) and Fred Ebb Award finalist *Charleston Olio*. Bayeza co-authored with her sister Ntozake Shange, the "gorgeous" (*NY Times*), "magical" (*Elle*), "dazzling" (*Essence*) novel *Some Sing, Some Cry*, chronicling 200 years of African American music through seven generations of women. She is currently artist-in-residence at Shadows-on-the-Teche in New Iberia Louisiana.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR: Talvin Wilks is a playwright, director and dramaturg. His plays include *Tod, the boy, Tod, The Trial of Uncle S&M, Bread of Heaven, An American Triptych, Jimmy and Lorraine: A Musing*, and *As I Remember It with Carmen de Lavallade*. Critically acclaimed directorial projects include the world or regional premiere productions of *UDU* by Sekou Sundiata, *The Love Space Demands* by Ntozake Shange, the Obie Award/AUDELCO Award winning *The Shaneequa Chronicles* by Stephanie Berry, *This Bitter Earth* by Harrison David Rivers, *The White Card* by Claudia Rankine, *The Peculiar Patriot* by Liza Jessie Peterson and *The Ballad of Emmett Till* and *Benevolence* by Ifa Bayeza. He is a

co-writer/co-director/dramaturg for Ping Chong's ongoing series of *Undesirable Elements* and *Collidescope: Adventures in Pre- and Post-Racial America*. He has also served as dramaturg for six collaborations with the Bebe Miller Company, *Going to the Wall*, the Bessie Award winning, *Verge*, *Necessary Beauty*, *A History*, *The Making Room*, and *Landing/Place* for which he received a 2006 Bessie Award. Other dramaturgical collaborations include work with Camille A. Brown and Dancers (*Mr. TOL E. RAnCE*, *BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play*, and *ink*), Urban Bush Women (*Hep Hep Sweet Sweet*, *Walking with 'Trane*, and *SCAT!*), and the stage adaptation of Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* at the Apollo Theatre. He is currently an Assistant Professor in the Theatre Arts and Dance Department, University of Minnesota/Twin Cities and a recipient of the 2020 McKnight Theater Artist Fellowship.

ABOUT THE MOSAIC THEATER COMPANY OF DC

Mosaic Theater Company of DC is committed to making transformational, socially relevant art, producing plays by authors on the front lines of conflict zones, and building a fusion community to address some of the most pressing issues of our times. Free public programming and educational initiatives complement our productions. Mosaic is dedicated to making our theater a model of diversity and inclusion on stage and off. We strive to foster a culture of listening and welcoming, embracing complexity and a multi-focal perspective. www.mosaictheater.org