

PRESS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release

Distinguished Director and Famed Playwright Join Forces At Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit

October 16, 2006 Detroit, MI – Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit brings together two talented theatre artists this season. Janet D. Cleveland, former Education Director at Plowshares Theatre Company, joins Mosaic as their new Director of Acting and playwright Charles “OyamO” Gordon is onboard to create a new original work for this internationally acclaimed company.

According to CEO and Founder, Rick Sperling, “Janet’s tremendous experience and skill will bring the artistic level of Mosaic’s productions to new heights; part of our continuing efforts to ensure that Mosaic’s young artists receive truly professional performing arts training.”

Ms. Cleveland brings over a decade of award winning directing experience to Mosaic, including the 2004 Detroit Free Press Theatre Excellence Award for Best Director for *Blues For An Alabama Sky*. In 1991, she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Arts from Wayne State University. Since then she has been recognized throughout Detroit for her accomplished directing at Detroit Repertory Theatre, BoarsHead Professional Theatre Company, Performance Network and Plowshares Theatre Company.

“It feels great to be a part of a company that means so much to its young artists and its community,” said Ms. Cleveland, “I hope to raise the bar for artistic quality even higher, and to give these young artists the tools to succeed as performing artists in the tradition of excellence that Mosaic productions have become known for in Michigan, and internationally”

When the curtain rises at the Detroit Film Theatre in May 2007, Ms. Cleveland will be at the helm of Mosaic’s spring show, *City In A Strait*, by the celebrated playwright, and University of Michigan writer-in-residence, OyamO. Mr. Sperling is stepping away from his usual role as director and putting all his focus on Mosaic’s *Imagine Their Next Stage* Capital Campaign.

The chance to have such a respected and notable professional write a play for Mosaic Youth Theater is an honor both Mr. Sperling and Ms. Cleveland value. OyamO’s work is world renowned, having been performed at Yale Repertory Theatre, where he received his MFA in playwrighting, the Public Theatre, The Kennedy Center, the Goodman Theatre, Theatre du Horla in Avignon, France and the National Theatre Institute in Montreal, among others. He has been awarded fellowships from the Guggenheim, Rockefeller and McKnight Foundations and won the prestigious Eric Kocher Playwrights Award for his play *The White Black Man* in 1999.

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In collaboration with the
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Ms. Cleveland previously had the opportunity to work with OyamO on his play *Famous Orpheus* at the Karamu Performance Theatre in Cleveland, Ohio. She is looking forward to once again “taking part in OyamO’s creative joy in developing a story from start to finish, and the collaboration it will take to make *City In A Strait* an amazing theatrical event for Detroit audiences.”

Over the next two years, beginning with the creation of *City In A Strait*, OyamO will continue to work with Mosaic on writing new plays. Right now, OyamO is “excited about discovering what civil rights truly mean in Detroit. What was Detroit’s response to the civil rights movement, from individuals to the community at large? The title, *City In A Strait*, refers to the difficult position Detroit is caught in as it struggles to re-invent itself within an historically challenging environment.”

Moving and thought provoking, *City In A Strait* follows a group of Detroit teenagers during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, as their lives, and our city, are forever changed. The title evokes the sharply divided racial lines that have broken our city apart for generations. As *City In A Strait* unfolds, the young people find them selves pulled by opposing currents that alter them, just as the city of Detroit was altered after 1967. Whatever the future will hold, today as it was then, it lies in the hands of Detroit’s youth.

Support Mosaic’s young artists as they **excel on stage and in life**. For more information about Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit visit www.mosaicdetroit.org.

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