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WOODIE KING JR.'S NEW FEDERAL THEATRE SETS ANNUAL NTOZAKE SHANGE READINGS SERIES

NEW YORK -- Woodie King's New Federal Theatre (NFT) has set plays by Mustapha Matura, S. Shephard-Massat and Larry Muhammad for the June, 2021 edition of its Annual Ntozake Shange Readings Series, which will be held three Tuesdays in June--June 8, 15 and 22-- all in live streamed readings on Zoom. This readings series is used to develop African-American writers and to select plays that New Federal Theatre may present as full productions.

The series is named for the late playwright Ntozake Shange, who died in October 2018. Her relationship with Woodie King, Jr.'s New Federal Theatre (NFT) goes back to the 1976-76 season, when NFT presented the first production of "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enough." NFT subsequently moved the play in a co-production with Joseph Papp to the Public Theater for eight weeks, then to Broadway's Booth Theatre (in a co-production). Woodie King then produced "Colored Girls..." in London, directed by Avery Brooks and in Australia, directed by Oz Scott.

All readings are free but donations will be gratefully accepted. To sign up, visit: www.newfederaltheatre.com.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 8 at 7:00 PM

"A Small World" by Mustapha Matura, directed by Seret Scott

With: Joyce Sylvester and Tucker Smallwood

Two Jamaicans, a man and woman, meet by coincidence after 20 years and rekindle a relationship. Playwright Mustapha Matura (1939-2019), a Trinidadian playwright living in London, gained attention early in his career with his satire "Play Mas," which opened at the London Royal Court in 1974, making him the first playwright of color to have a play produced in the West End. His often satirical plays spoke for an alienated West Indian population in postwar Britain and for the people he left behind in Trinidad and Tobago.

Director Seret Scott is an Associate Artist with The Old Globe, where she has directed a dozen productions/premieres, and a prolific director Off-Broadway. She is recipient of the Gordon Davidson Lifetime Achievement Directing Award and the PEW Charitable Trust Residency Award with Long Wharf Theatre.

June 15 at 7:00 PM

"A Soft Escape by S. Shephard-Massat

With: Frankie Faison, Paris Crayton III and Elain Graham

A play about two people who were children together, grew up in a small, southern town together, married one another and, after having traveled through sickness and entered old age, are now at the end of their lives together.

Playwright S. Shephard-Massat is author of "Waiting to Be Invited," which has been produced in theaters across the US, and numerous award-winning plays including "Someplace Soft to Fall," "Levee James," "Deeds" and "Starving."

June 22 at 7:00 PM

"Jimmy's Last Night At Mikell's" by Larry Muhammad, directed by A. Dean Irby

Cast TBA

Jams Baldwin, who has been writing himself into bad health, returns to New York City for some rest and relaxation. He meets up with Maya Angelou and Miles Davis at the iconic jazz club Mikel's, where his brother David tends bar and which is unexpectedly closing. What's intended as a celebration turns into an Irish wake.

Playwright Larry Muhammad is producing director at Kentucky Black Repertory Theatre. In 2019, NFT produced his "Looking for Leroy," a play about Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka, which won six AUDELCO Awards including Best Play. Nearly all his plays are socially conscious and written with a historian's eye. Director A. Dean Irby has acted and directed for the New York Shakespeare Festival, Negro Ensemble Company, Arena Stage, New Federal Theatre, and Crossroads Theatre, and at numerous regional and university theaters. He is recipient of two AUDELCO Awards for his direction of the original production of "Home" for the Negro Ensemble Company and "Boogie Woogie and Booker T." for NFT.

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PHOTOS OF PLAYWRIGHTS: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/JWV7qg3gkSXGtYog6>