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## WOOLLY MAMMOTH THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES 2023-24 SEASON: ENTER THE WOOLLYVERSE

Visit the realm of Season 44: a celebration of LGBTQ+ voices and global perspectives confronting today's world

(Washington, D.C.) **Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company** announces its 2023-24 season. **Enter the Woollyverse** and explore the universes of: a larger-than-life mother from Kyiv, a gay Bengali-American documentarian, a kick-ass HBCU dance troupe, a queer academic and his Muslim mother, a Mohegan Shakespeare scholar, and a fabulous floral genderqueer chanteuse.

"The theatre on our stage will always invite you to look at the world a little differently," shares **Maria Manuela Goyanes, Artistic Director**. "This season speaks to the current moment with immediacy and urgency. The record number of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation introduced in this country this past year compelled us to spotlight deeply personal yet highly theatrical queer stories, like the work of Shayok Misha Chowdhury, Adil Mansour, John Jarboe, and Justin Weaks. These plays are meant to refract off each other, spark even deeper conversation, and be out and proud in our nation's capital."

"This season is also all about collaboration," continues Goyanes. "We're co-producing a new Ukrainian play by Sasha Denisova with the Wilma, our aesthetic sister theatre in Philadelphia. We're bringing Madeline Sayet back to DC in the newly renovated Folger Shakespeare Library after a national tour. We're sharing in the multi-city excitement around Little Amal finally walking across America. And our commissioning program honoring the revered philanthropist Marvin Weissberg is bearing fruit; I can't wait to share the work of Vivian J.O. Barnes and Justin Weaks with the DMV and beyond."

"I'm so excited to Enter the Woollyverse for my first full season as Managing Director," says **Kimberly E. Douglas**. "We have a full slate of outstanding partners this season, including the Wilma Theater, Soho Rep, NAATCO, Kelly Strayhorn Theater, Folger Shakespeare Library, CulturalDC, Bearded Ladies Cabaret, and many more — not to mention the inventive and accomplished artists and playwrights! Woolly is thinking abundantly in Season 44, forging new connections, pushing the limits of what we can do, and providing so much for our Golden Ticket holders to explore."

### 2023-24 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

This September, Season 44 begins with the world premiere of **MY MAMA AND THE FULL-SCALE INVASION** by Ukrainian playwright **Sasha Denisova**. This brand-new play is a larger-than-life accounting of one mother's resistance during the war in Ukraine, drawn from real-life messages between Sasha and

her mother in Kyiv. This co-production with the Wilma Theater is directed by Wilma Co-Artistic Director and member of Woolly Mammoth's Company of Artists, **Yury Urnov**. The cast includes D.C. legend **Holly Twyford** as the titular mother, along with Wilma Co-Artistic Director **Lindsay Smiling** and Wilma HotHouse Company Member **Suli Holum**. Scenic design is by **Misha Kachman** and costume design is by **Ivania Stack**, both members of Woolly Mammoth's Company of Artists.

Closing out 2023, Woolly will present the Soho Rep and NAATCO production of **PUBLIC OBSCENITIES**, written and directed by **Shayok Misha Chowdhury**. This intimate family drama offers a snapshot of queer life in Kolkata through the lens of a Bengali-American Ph.D. student, Choton, and his Black American cinematographer boyfriend, Raheem. The interracial couple travels to India to make a documentary about the LGBTQ+ scene and stumbles upon a roll of undeveloped film in Choton's grandfather's old Rolleicord camera. This "gorgeously precise" bilingual production enjoyed a successful run in New York in 2023, named a New York Times Critic's Pick with Chowdhury described as "a writer with great promise who, with *Public Obscenities*, may have found himself on the brink of greatness."

The first play of 2024 is **THE SENSATIONAL SEA MINK-ETTES** by **Vivian J.O. Barnes** and directed by **Taylor Reynolds**. In this world premiere play, a dynamic HBCU dance team gears up for their big Homecoming performance, with mounting pressure and high expectations resulting in shocking events. *Sea Mink-ettes* is a hilarious and high-energy thriller, all about the pressure on young Black women to be the best, premiering at Woolly thanks in part to the [Weissberg Commissions](#).

**WHERE WE BELONG** returns to Washington DC, to be produced at the newly-renovated Folger Shakespeare Library in its historic theater. Originally filmed and presented digitally by Woolly in association with the Folger, this show highlights Mohegan theater-maker **Madeline Sayet**'s travels to England to pursue a Ph.D. in Shakespeare. Starring Sayet and directed by **Mei Ann Teo**, this solo piece invites us to consider what it means to belong in a globalized world. Following its world premiere in June 2021, the production had a successful national tour, appearing at Philadelphia Theatre Company, the Goodman Theatre, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, Seattle Repertory Theatre, The Public Theater, and Portland Center Stage, with performances slated at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

In April 2024, **Adil Mansoor**'s autobiographical work **AMM(I)GONE** hits the Woolly stage, in association with the Kelly Strayhorn Theater. In exploring *Antigone* and Islamic traditions together, Mansoor and his mother find something new in their relationship and identities — him in his queerness and his mother in her devout beliefs. Mansoor was a member of the [Artistic Caucus](#), a program dreamed up by Woolly and three other theatres to disrupt the new work assembly line in American theatre.

Closing the season with a bouquet of original music and floral costumes, trans creator and performer **John Jarboe** asks us to wonder what and who we consume to become ourselves in **ROSE: YOU ARE WHO YOU EAT**. In a heartbreaking and hilarious series of original songs and stories, Jarboe and a live band explore identity and gender through the lens of cannibalism. Through a partnership with CulturalDC and The Bearded Ladies Cabaret, this production will have its theatrical co-world premiere at Woolly and FringeArts. Developmental stages were previously presented by Works & Process at the Guggenheim Rotunda and Theater and via CulturalDC.

**Justin Weeks**, Weissberg Commissioned playwright and member of the Woolly Mammoth Company of Artists, will present a workshop of his new piece **A FINE MADNESS**. A beloved award-winning actor in

the D.C. community, Weaks is emerging as a playwright and deviser in this personal story about his HIV status. Woolly will present this workshop with Pay-What-You-Will tickets for each performance.

### NEW WORK HIGHLIGHTS

Woolly Mammoth will be one of the artistic partners bringing [Little Amal](#) to Washington D.C. as part of her 6,000 mile nationwide walk. She will be welcomed by 1,000+ artists at 100+ events in 35 towns and cities across the United States. Little Amal is the 12-foot puppet of a Syrian refugee child (as seen in Woolly's co-production with Shakespeare Theatre Company, *The Jungle*) who has traveled to 13 countries carrying her message: "Don't forget about us." She will be at the heart of a series of public arts events in D.C. as a symbol of hope for global human rights, refugees, and displaced people everywhere. *Amal Walks Across America* is produced by **The Walk Productions** in association with **Handspring Puppet Company**.

Partnering with the Valley Place Arts Collaborative and Oye Group, Woolly will also embark on Phase 1 of the **TAXILANDIA DC** project, directed by **Flako Jimenez**. [TAXILANDIA](#) is a multi-city hyperlocal journey through gentrification, eventually resulting in a personal taxi tour showcasing select areas of the city affected. The DC project will focus on the Anacostia community. In Phase 1, in-person and virtual salons will be held with local artists to gather information on the road map and story of gentrification in this region.

Two of Woolly's previously announced Weissberg Commissioned artists are included in the 2023-24 Season: Vivian J.O. Banks (full production) and Justin Weaks (workshop). These commissions are opportunities for Woolly to support artists born, raised, or based in Washington D.C. and surrounding areas and/or writing about topics that resonate with the DMV. Woolly's work with Gethsemane Herron and Jenn Kidwell will also be further developed this season, with more details to be announced.

### CONNECTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

[Connectivity at Woolly Mammoth](#) is integral to all of the theatre's work, linking its artistic mission to its social, civic and political mission. The work of connectivity rests on four pillars: community engagement, audience engagement, audience development, and learning.

The Core Partners program identifies key organizations that share Woolly's values with whom it can have reciprocal, deep, longstanding, and transformational relationships. Current Core Partners include Spit Dat, Black in Space, and Strathmore.

In the Core Partner relationship with [Spit Dat in residency](#) at Woolly Mammoth, the longest running open mic in the nation's capital, monthly free performances are held at Woolly that include a rotating line-up of dynamic featured performers.

Other work of Connectivity includes: engaging interactive lobby displays that connect to the work onstage, art exhibits with local talent, panel discussions and talkbacks with experts and artists, Arts and Social Justice Fellowships for high school students in collaboration with Strathmore, affinity nights such as Black Out performances (intentionally all-Black performances to create a healing space and community for Black-identifying folks), arts collaborations with community organizations and partners, and additional free artistic experiences and showcases.

## **GOLDEN TICKETS**

Available now! Golden Tickets are the Woolly way to see the 2023-24 Season. Golden Ticket holders can see any project in the Enter the Woollyverse Season — with the exception of *WHERE WE BELONG* — on any date, in any seat, for as many times as desired (subject to availability). Golden Ticket holders will also get a special offer for *WHERE WE BELONG* at the Folger Theatre.

Golden Tickets can work like a traditional subscription—with all seats and dates decided, set, and booked before single tickets are available—or with full flexibility—with performances booked much closer to the performance date via their online portal, calling the Box Office, or through the concierge e-mail of [goldentickets@woollymammoth.net](mailto:goldentickets@woollymammoth.net). Golden Ticket holders also get a 20% discount on companion tickets, to bring friends and family with them!

One 2023-24 Golden Ticket is priced at \$375, with a limited number available at a more accessible price of \$250. They can be purchased online at [woollymammoth.net](http://woollymammoth.net), by phone at (202) 393-3939, or via e-mail at [tickets@woollymammoth.net](mailto:tickets@woollymammoth.net). Single tickets will go on sale in August.

## **2023-24 SEASON LISTING**

*Artists, titles, and dates subject to change*

### **My Mama and the Full-Scale Invasion**

*A co-production with The Wilma Theater*

by Sasha Denisova

translated by Misha Kachman

adapted by Kellie Mecleary

directed by Yury Urnov

*World Premiere*

September – October, 2023

### *The Resistance of One Octogenarian*

Sasha's 82-year-old mother, Olga, is on the frontlines of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, having lived in Kyiv her whole life. Olga is thrust into increasingly fantastical situations: she strategizes with President Zelenskyy, strikes Russian drones with jars of pickles, and even debates with God. Inspired by online chats with her mother, playwright Sasha Denisova brings us this new play about a family's connection and legacy amidst the present-day war and global crisis.

*Soho Rep and NAATCO National Partnership Project Production of*

### **Public Obscenities**

written and directed by Shayok Misha Chowdhury

November – December, 2023

### *Snapshot: An Intimate Portrait Develops*

When Choton returns to Kolkata on a research trip with his Black American boyfriend Raheem, his grandfather's photograph stares down at him from the walls of his family home. Choton loves being the translator, toggling nimbly between Bangla and English, interviewing queer locals, showing Raheem his world. But through the lens of Choton's grandfather's old camera, Raheem begins to notice things

Choton can't. Peer into this bilingual play from visionary writer-director Shayok Misha Chowdhury about the things we see, the things we miss, and the things that turn us on.

### **The Sensational Sea Mink-ettes**

By Vivian J.O. Barnes

Directed by Taylor Reynolds

*World Premiere*

February – March, 2024

*Stadium Lights.* ✨ *Screaming Fans.* 😄 *One Shot at Excellence.* 💣

The Sensational Sea Mink-ettes are days away from their Homecoming half-time dance performance and the pressure is on. The student body, the administration, the alumni, their families — everyone is expecting perfection. As the big day creeps closer, the women must contend with flaring tempers, bodies pushed to their limits, and what it means to be a team in Vivian J.O. Barnes' funny and surprising world premiere play.

*Developmental support provided through the Weissberg Commissions funded by the Weissberg Foundation. Vivian J.O. Barnes is a recipient of a Venturous Playwright Fellowship supported by Venturous Theater Fund. The Fellowship was created with the Lark Theatre and is now in partnership with the Playwrights' Center.*

### **Amm(i)gone**

Created and Performed by Adil Mansoor

Co-directed by Lyam B. Gabel

*in association with Kelly Strayhorn Theater*

April 2024

*From Sophocles to a mother/child apology*

Creator and performer Adil Mansoor invites his Pakistani mother to translate *Antigone* into Urdu as means of exploring the tensions between family and faith. Should he keep his queerness buried from his devout Muslim mother? Through Greek tragedy, teachings from the Quran, and audio conversations with his mother, Mansoor creates this theatrical blend of lecture and personal story about locating love across faith.

*Media Co-designers: Joseph Amodei & Davine Byon; Sound Designer: Aaron Landgraf; Set and Lighting Designer: Xotchil Musser*

*Amm(i)gone is a National Performance Network (NPN) Creation & Development Fund Project co-commissioned by Kelly Strayhorn Theater in partnership with The Theater Offensive and NPN. Amm(i)gone was developed as a Hatch Arts Collective project.*

### **Rose: You Are Who You Eat**

Conceived, Written, and Performed by John Jarboe

Directed by MK Tuomanen

*In association with CulturalDC and The Bearded Ladies Cabaret*

*Theatrical Co-World Premiere with FringeArts*

June 2024

*A true story of gender feasting, set to music*

Once upon a vine, John Jarboe's aunt revealed that John not only had a twin sister in the womb, but that

John consumed her: “You ate her. That’s why you are the way you are.” This was a lot for John to swallow! In this musical shrine to the consumed twin, named Rose, John welcomes you into a feast of gender through song, storytelling, and a full plate of wordplay.

*Rose was commissioned by Works & Process and developed in collaboration with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret. The work was created during the pandemic in Works & Process bubble residencies at Mount Tremper Arts and Bethany Arts Community, with the support of the Mellon Foundation and Doris Duke Foundation. Early iterations of Rose were presented by Works & Process in the Guggenheim Rotunda (2021) Guggenheim Theater (2022), and CulturalDC (2022).*

### **At Folger Theatre**

#### **Where We Belong**

By Madeline Sayet

Directed by Mei Ann Teo

*co-produced with Folger Theatre*

February 15 – March 17, 2024

*An Indigenous theatre-maker’s journey*

Returning to D.C. after a national tour! In 2015, a Mohegan theatre-maker moves to England to pursue a PhD in Shakespeare, grappling with the question of what it means to remain or leave, as the Brexit vote threatens to further disengage the UK from the wider world. Moving between nations that have failed to reckon with their ongoing roles in colonialism, Achokayis finds comfort in the journeys of their Native ancestors who had to cross the ocean in the 1700s to help their people. In this intimate and exhilarating solo piece directed by Mei Ann Teo, Sayet asks us what it means to belong in an increasingly globalized world.

### **Workshop Performance**

#### **A Fine Madness**

by Justin Weaks

*Workshop Performance*

Helen Hayes award-winning actor Justin Weaks shares his personal experience as a Black gay man receiving a positive HIV diagnosis. In this workshop performance, Justin’s beautiful virtuosity as a performer is displayed through a variety of characters, exploration of movement, and a non-linear fragmented story with a kaleidoscope of poetry, affirmations, scientific findings, and narration. Audience and performer together share a healing experience and space for discovery.

*Developmental support provided through the Weissberg Commissions funded by the Weissberg Foundation.*

### **ABOUT WOOLLY MAMMOTH THEATRE COMPANY**

The Tony Award®-winning Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company creates badass theatre that highlights the stunning, challenging, and tremendous complexity of our world. For over 40 years, Woolly has maintained a high standard of artistic rigor while simultaneously daring to take risks, innovate, and push beyond perceived boundaries. One of the few remaining theatres in the country to maintain a company of artists, Woolly serves an essential research and development role within the American theatre. Plays premiered here have gone on to productions at hundreds of theatres all over the world and have had lasting impacts on the field. Currently co-led by Artistic Director Maria Manuela Goyanes and Managing

Director Kimberly E. Douglas, Woolly is located in Washington, DC, equidistant from the Capitol and the White House. This unique location influences Woolly's investment in actively working towards an equitable, participatory, and creative democracy.

Woolly Mammoth stands upon occupied, unceded territory: the ancestral homeland of the Nacotchtank whose descendants belong to the Piscataway peoples. Furthermore, the foundation of this city, and most of the original buildings in Washington, DC, were funded by the sale of enslaved people of African descent and built by their hands.

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