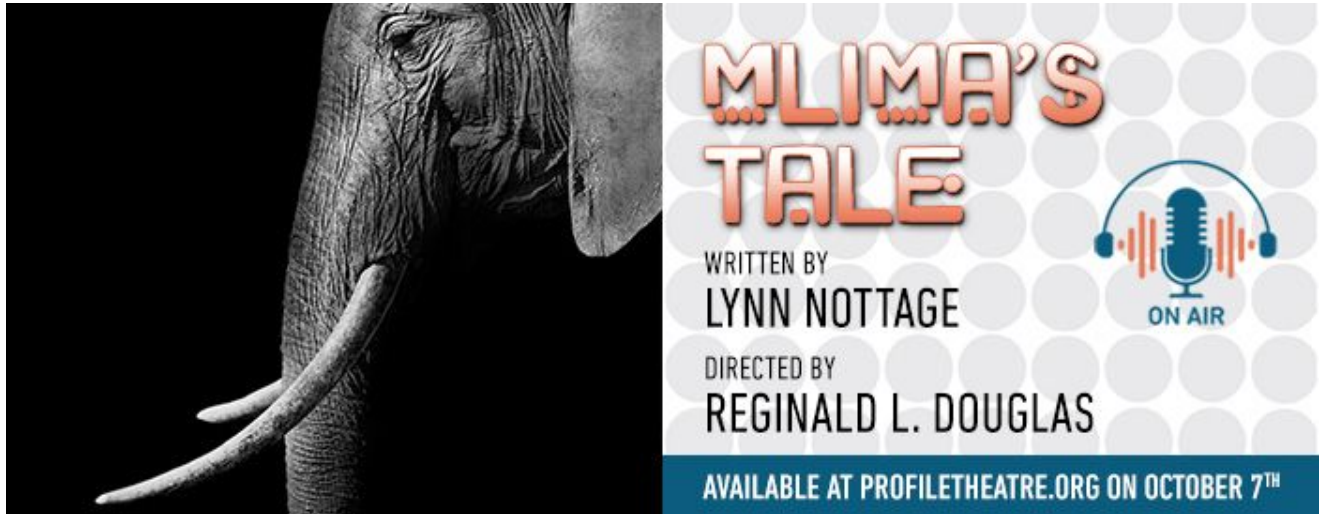




FOR IMMEDIATE MEDIA RELEASE:

Profile Theatre Press Contact:
Jen Mitas, Marketing Consultant
jenmitas@gmail.com
503-804-2402



Profile Theatre presents Lynn Nottage's *Mlima's Tale* as the first audio play of their 2020-2021 Season ON AIR

A story of an elephant and the international ivory trade; mirrors the story of the brutal commodification of African bodies

What deals will we make to get what we most desire?

"Lynn Nottage's beautiful, endlessly echoing portrait of a murder and its afterlife."

-Ben Brantley, [New York Times](#)

PORTLAND, OREGON. September 8, 2020- On October 7, Profile Theatre will release the first audio play in their 2020-2021 season ON AIR. *Mlima's Tale* -- a vibrant piece of story-theatre with original music -- tells the story of Mlima, last of the "big-tusker" elephants in Kenya, killed for the international ivory market. As his tusks change hands and travel the world from Kenya, to Vietnam, to Beijing, Mlima's spirit follows. Written by two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner, Lynn Nottage (*Sweat and Ruined*), *Mlima's Tale* explores ancestral history and the trauma that arises when bodies are subject to market forces and human greed.

As it documents the threat of extinction that African elephants face, ***Mlima's Tale*** captures the spiritual dimensions of this loss, and its resonance with the Atlantic Slave Trade. As Lynn Nottage [explained](#) to the New Yorker's Peter Canby, Mlima's murder and subsequent journey from Kenya to Beijing is intended to conjure the Middle Passage and the shipping of millions of Africans to the New World. "It's not just about the exploitation of African ivory. It's also minerals, animals, and even people. That exploitation continues."

For Profile's production of ***Mlima's Tale*** Director Reginald L. Douglas will use sound, original music and choral singing to conjure Mlima's journey. Douglas notes,

"*Mlima's Tale* starts with a summoning of ancestors and calls upon all of us to heed their lessons. Lynn's writing has incredible musicality and rhythm already, and when added to Jenn Mundia's gorgeous original score, I hope audiences will feel the power of ritual and communion that only theater, whether seen or heard, can provide."

Using the magic of Zoom, Profile Theatre's production of ***Mlima's Tale*** brings together artists from across the country. While the ensemble of three, who play up to a dozen roles each, are all from Portland, Director Reginald L. Douglas and others hail from around the U.S. Broadway, TV, and film Actor Keith Randolph Smith, perhaps best known for his work with Spike Lee, will play Mlima. DJ Curtis and Ithaca Tell (who both starred in Portland Center Stage's *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*) last spring are together again as shape-shifting ensemble members along with Treasure Lunan (*Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberly* at PCS). LA-based costume designer Dominique Fawn Hill (*Hedwig* at PCS) will provide a visual journey through the world of the play on the Profile website as a companion piece to the audio play.

Profile Theatre Artistic Director Josh Hecht notes,

"Though the means of production have changed, the joy of bringing together consummate artists to tell incredible stories remains the same. I'm thrilled to bring director Reg Douglas to Profile at last after a few years of trying to find the right project. Sound designer Elisheba Ittoop is a talent of national repute, as is actor Keith Randolph Smith. What a gift to bring them into collaboration with local treasures Ithica Tell, DJ Curtis and Treasure Lunan, three artists I've long admired. Having already heard the recording dailies, I can say with certainty we're in for a treat."

Mlima's Tale, by Lynn Nottage is directed by **Reginald L. Douglas** with sound design by **Elisheba Ittoop** (*72 Miles to Go - Roundabout Theatre*), original composition by **Jenn Mundia** (*Heads or Tails* EP), and costume sketches by **Dominique Fawn Hill** (*Hedwig and the Angry Inch* - Portland Center Stage). The cast includes: Broadway television, theatre and film actor **Keith Randolph Smith** (*Fences*, *Come Back*, *Little Sheba*, *King Hedley II*, *The Piano Lesson*, and *Salome* - all on Broadway); **Treasure Lunan** as Ensemble 1 (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *School Girls: Or, the African Mean Girls Play* - Portland Center Stage); **Ithica Tell** as Ensemble 2 (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* - Portland Center Stage); and **DJ Curtis** as Ensemble 3 (*Hedwig and the Angry Inch* - Portland Center Stage).

In October, Profile will also be releasing the first episodes of their new podcast called **SATELLITE**, which will be the home for artist features, panel discussions, readings and concerts relevant to the audio plays. The first episodes will include stories about elephant conservation, a profile of singer-songwriter Jenn Mundia and other content related to the themes presented in *Mlima's Tale*.

DATES

Mlima's Tale will be available October 7-November 4, 2020 at profiletheatre.org/mlimas-tale

COST

All audio plays are free for members for a month or longer and available to non-members for 24-hour rentals at a sliding scale starting at \$10.

MEMBERSHIPS

Memberships are on sale for \$150 at profiletheatre.org/membership. Benefits include exclusive access to *Las Meninas* by Lynn Nottage, behind the scenes content and unlimited free admission for one to any in-person performances they are able to produce through June 2021. For more information, contact the Box Office at boxoffice@profiletheatre.org or 503.242.0080.

ABOUT THE 2020-2021 SEASON

Mlima's Tale is part of PROFILE'S 2020-2021 Season program **ON AIR**. While COVID-19 limits public gatherings, Profile will share virtual content that highlights three playwrights featured in GENERATIONS: Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Lynn Nottage and Paula Vogel. Along with *Mlima's Tale*, this fall Profile will present *Las Meninas* by Lynn Nottage and *Hot 'N' Throbbing* by Paula Vogel. Profile is also offering two new podcast series. **Community Profile: Voices from the Real World**, will feature interviews and writing by participants in Profile's affinity spaces for LGBTQIA+ people and Black Women to cultivate their creative voices with award-winning writing mentors. Additionally, Profile will present **Satellite: Beyond the Page**, a podcast full of bonus content including concerts, artist interviews and feature stories that will give audiences a chance to go deeper into the themes of the audio plays and their featured playwrights as they play out in the greater Portland area. Audiences can expect additional program announcements in November 2020 and February 2021.

NEXT UP: *Hot 'N' Throbbing* by Paula Vogel, Directed by Jamie M. Rea

Available November 4, 2020–June 20, 2021

The story of a single suburban mom writing feminist erotica to support her kids. Her family depends on her to keep food on the table and to keep her dangerous, obsessive estranged husband away from them. Obscenity begins at home, but it's not the screenplays that are obscene.

ABOUT Lynn Nottage— MLIMA'S TALE PLAYWRIGHT

Lynn Nottage is a playwright and a screenwriter, and the first-and-only woman to have been awarded the Pulitzer Prize twice. Her plays have been produced widely in the United States and

throughout the world. Her most recent play, *Mlima's Tale*, premiered at the Public Theater in May 2018. In the spring of 2017, *Sweat* (Pulitzer Prize, Obie Award, Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Tony Nomination, Drama Desk Nomination) moved to Broadway after a sold out run at The Public Theater. It premiered and was commissioned by Oregon Shakespeare Festival/Arena Stage. Other plays include *By The Way*, *Meet Vera Stark* (Lilly Award, Drama Desk Nomination), *Ruined* (Pulitzer Prize, Obie, Lucille Lortel, New York Drama Critics' Circle, Audelco, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Award), *Intimate Apparel* (American Theatre Critics and New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards for Best Play), *Fabulation, or The Re-Education of Undine* (Obie Award), *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, *Las Meninas*, *Mud*, *River*, *Stone*, *Por'knockers* and *POOF!*. Upcoming premieres include an opera version of *Intimate Apparel* and *MJ the Musical*, a Broadway musical, featuring the music of Michael Jackson.

Nottage is the recipient of a MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship, Steinberg "Mimi" Distinguished Playwright Award, PEN/Laura Pels Master Playwright Award, Merit and Literature Award from The Academy of Arts and Letters, Columbia University Provost Grant, Doris Duke Artist Award, among others. She is an Associate Professor in the Theatre Department at Columbia School of the Arts.

ABOUT Reginald L. Douglas— *MLIMA'S TALE* DIRECTOR is a director, producer, and advocate dedicated to creating new work and supporting new voices, and the Associate Artistic Director at Studio Theatre in Washington, DC. His passion and acumen for both new play development and re-investigating the classics have led him to theaters across the country, including directing work at Eugene O'Neill Center, TheaterWorks Hartford, Contemporary American Theatre Festival, Everyman Theatre, Weston Playhouse, Pittsburgh CLO, Arizona Theatre Company, Theatre Squared, Playwrights Center, Profile Theatre, NNPN/Kennedy Center, NNPN Showcase at B Street Theatre, McCarter, Florida Rep, Luna Stage, Harlem Stage, Wild Project, Signature Center, Drama League, The Lark, New York Theatre Workshop, where he was an inaugural 2050 Directing Fellow, and City Theatre Company in Pittsburgh, where he served as the Artistic Producer from 2015-2020.

Reginald has developed and directed plays and musicals by many acclaimed writers including Dominique Morisseau, Cori Thomas, Angelica Chéri, Nikkole Salter, Kemp Powers, Jen Silverman, Ngozi Anyanwu, Matt Schatz, Amy Evans, Zakiyyah Alexander & Imani Uzuri, Brian Quijada, Dave Harris, Chisa Hutchinson, Tarrance Arvelle Chisholm, Josh Wilder, Harrison David Rivers, Korde Arrington Tuttle, a.k. payne, Craig "muMs" Grant, Jessica Dickey, Laura Brienza, Kevin R. Free, Micah Ariel Watson, and several others. Reginald currently serves on the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the National New Play Network; regularly serves on the selection committees for local and national fellowships and grants; has spoken at several national conferences and festivals; and is a guest lecturer at the O'Neill National Theatre Institute. Reginald is a proud graduate of Georgetown University and member of SDC, and the recipient of the National Theatre Conference's 2020 Emerging Professional Award.

ABOUT PROFILE THEATRE

Founded in 1997, Profile Theatre quickly established itself as a leading voice in Portland's cultural scene. In 2010, Profile was awarded the inaugural New National Theatre Company Award from the American Theatre Wing, designed to bring national attention to "the most inspiring and innovative theatre companies on our national landscape." Profile has twice been recognized by Advance Gender Equity in the Arts for its leadership in the field, and its Diversity and Inclusion Initiative has been profiled in HowlRound. The 2018–2019 season was Hecht's first fully programmed season as Artistic Director and included the commission and world premiere of *(Un)Conditional* by National Medal of Arts Awardee Ping Chong + Company, a community-invested work amplifying the themes of the Lisa Kron / Anna Deavere Smith season, and brought Lisa Kron to Portland for a week-long Playwright's Residency where she developed the film script for *Fun Home*, led a writing workshop for community members and gave a performance of some of her solo work on the Profile stage.

Profile's 2019–2020 season used their unique mission to dedicate their season to an in-depth exploration of a playwright's vision with the first season of *Generations*; a two-season exploration of plays from Nottage, Vogel and Jacob-Jenkins's three different generational vantage points. The mainstage productions of Nottage's *Sweat* (directed by Christopher Acebo) and Vogel's *Indecent* and *Baltimore Waltz* (both directed by Josh Hecht) were all lauded by local critics. Their production of Nottage's *By The Way, Meet Vera Stark* (directed by Chip Miller) and Branden Jacobs-Jenkins's Playwrights Residency in Portland and public performance, scheduled for May and June 2020, were both canceled due to the pandemic. In June 2020, the company released its first serial audio play *Claudia, A Viral Love Story*. Based on a COVID-inspired "recipe" of playwriting "ingredients" provided by Pulitzer Prize-winner *Paula Vogel*, and written by an astounding group of nine playwrights and screenwriters. This original audio play was released for free and can be played via Profile's website and on popular podcast apps.

*For additional bios or to arrange interviews with artists, please contact Marketing Consultant Jen Mitas. For more information, visit profiletheatre.org or call 503.242.0080.

#####