

For Immediate Release

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**NEW GHOSTLIGHT ARTS INITIATIVE
LAUNCHES EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING
AS PART OF THE 2ND ANNUAL
OBSIDIAN THEATRE FESTIVAL**

**HIGHLIGHTING EMERGING BLACK VOICES
PRODUCED IN DETROIT**

**Inaugural Youth Playwriting Competition
Spring/Summer 2022**

**GhostLight Arts Initiative classes begin
streaming weekly on April 27, 2022 at obsidianfest.org**

Detroit, MI - April 20, 2022 Ghostlight Productions and Nicely Theatre Group are partnering once again, for the 2nd Annual Obsidian Theatre Festival. This year, GhostLight Productions Inc. is excited to present our reimagined arts education programming, the Ghostlight Arts Initiative (GLAI). Formerly known as The Helping Hands Campaign for the Arts, GLAI is the non-profit arm of GhostLight, and focuses on using art as a catalyst for social change through arts education and activism. Returning for its sophomore year, the initiative offers three high quality, virtual performing arts courses to 7th through 12th graders across the country for four weeks culminating in a final project. Students will receive a certificate of participation or a certificate of completion, and choose between beginner and intermediate tracks in acting. They may also choose to take the GLAI dance track. Both acting and dance tracks are taught by GLAI Teaching

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Artists, **Kyle Dupree** (*Broadway Tours: Chicago, Mama Mia*), **Jasmin Richardson** (*Broadway: The Book of Mormon, Gettin' the Band Back Together*) and OTF Associate Artistic Director, **Alexis Sims** (*Broadway: For Colored Girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enough*).

These courses focus on building the students' technique, and fostering technical toolboxes upon which the foundation of their storytelling and creative expression may be built. All classes are completely FREE of charge and are aimed at creating a school to career guide for youth interested in pursuing professions in the arts. The entire curriculum can be found on the Obsidian Theatre Festival website: www.obsidianfest.org weekly beginning April 27, 2022.

After a successful inaugural year in the middle of a global pandemic, Obsidian will include intimate live and virtual offerings. "By now it's cliché to mention how difficult the past two years have been, but OTF has allowed us to create a platform for Black artists in Detroit. This work has the power to normalize Black cultural experiences, while simultaneously celebrating the diversity of Blackness," says **John Sloan III**, Co-Executive Producer of the 2nd Annual Obsidian Theatre Festival. Semi-Finalists for the 2nd Annual Festival were announced in early March and Finalists will be announced in late April.

Another component to this year's arts programming includes the inaugural GLAI Youth Playwriting Competition. Short plays written by Black identifying students in grades 7-12 were submitted by their teacher's. Submissions were in partnership with [Blackboard Plays](http://BlackboardPlays) via blackboardplays.submittable.com. Founded in 2008, by Obsidian Creative Producer, Garlia Cornelia Jones, Blackboard is devoted to Black Playwrights through the African Diaspora. The winner of this national competition will not only receive a \$500 Visa gift card, but also feedback from industry professionals. **Jason Veasey** (*Broadway: The Lion King* and *A Strange Loop*) and **Jasmin Richardson** serve as the submission review panel selecting the student finalists. A virtual, streamed presentation of their plays will be available July 7-10, 2022.

For several months, the Obsidian Exec Team has been working on getting the festival to this point. Alongside Co-Executive Producer and Producing Artistic Director, **John Sloan III** (*The Lion King*, *GhostLight Productions*) are Associate Artistic Director, **Alexis Sims**; Managing Director, **Joshua Cashman** (*Disney Theatrical*, *Steppenwolf*); Creative Producer, **Garlia Cornelia Jones** (*Blackboard Plays*, *Harlem9*, *The Public*, *PAAL*); General Manager, **Amber Gray** (*Blackboard Plays*); Production Manager, **Yemisi Odetoyinbo**; and Arts Education Manager, **Sarae Daniels**.

"As part of our mission, we are working to connect youth nationwide with free, supplementary educational resources and opportunities designed to engage their minds, feed their spirits, and foster awareness of how art can be used as a mechanism for change within themselves and the world around them. Part of our goal is to make sure students of all ages have access to educational opportunities. The second pathway for interaction lies in our desire to connect high school youth with college programs, and college youth with professional producing organizations." says Alexis Sims and Sarae Daniels.

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Obsidian is a hybrid theatre festival with virtual and intimate in-person performing arts events, as well as ancillary offerings. During its inaugural year, Obsidian featured emerging Black artists, actors, directors, and playwrights from Detroit. Ancillary content from last year can be found on [Youtube](#), [Facebook](#) and [ObsidianFest.org](#). Ancillary content for 2022 will also be found there, free of charge. Registration will be required and necessary for our COVID compliance, Health and Safety protocols.

Last year, Obsidian Theatre Festival produced 45 individual segments including panels, interviews, behind the scenes videos, original music performances, and educational opportunities for students across the country. There were over 50,000 minutes of content viewed and over 10,000 views worldwide with viewership in 48 states and 28 countries, and all with absolutely nothing spent on advertising.

Like last year, viewers will be encouraged to support one of these three charitable organizations: [Black Theatre United](#), [Detroit Public Schools Foundation](#) and Donate at www.obsidianfest.org/donate

During the Fall of 2020, Founder and Producing Artistic Director, John Sloan III and Co-Executive Producer of the festival, **David Carroll** put out a call for new work. The response was incredible, over two hundred writers, composers, and lyricists submitted work. In the middle of Covid, the team at Ghostlight was able to rehearse, stage, and film six productions in person without a single member of the 100+ person staff getting sick. Obsidian, produced in the city of Detroit, by Detroiters, is a celebration of Black stories that will highlight the prolific work of emerging Black voices, focusing on the vast array of diverse experiences of those within the African diaspora in America. New this year, the festival will be live across several venues in Downtown Detroit. "Our first season was so successful with viewership from across the world. But this festival is only as strong as the team producing it. And we have some of the best theatre and film professionals in the country working to uplift Black stories."

Visit www.obsidianfest.org for continued festival announcements and schedule updates.

ABOUT GHOSTLIGHT PRODUCTIONS

Ghostlight Productions Inc is a Detroit-based, full service production company specializing in the creation of original film, theatrical, and performance content; offering high end wrap around event production services at a Broadway calibre. Art that uplifts the underrepresented, and tells stories that are both compelling and complex.

For more information, please visit: www.ghostlightinc.com

ABOUT NICELY THEATRE GROUP

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Nicely Theatre Group is a professional, non-profit theatre company dedicated to increasing public access to live theatre with affordable, diverse performances. Our productions will be inclusive and representative of our community while growing and supporting the arts in metro Detroit. For more information, please visit: www.nicelytheatregroup.org

ABOUT BLACKBOARD PLAYS

Since 2008, **Blackboard Plays** has been devoted to Black Playwrights throughout the African Diaspora. Blackboard Reading Series was incubated @ [nancy manocherian's the cell](#) in Chelsea's Manhattan as a resident series for 10 years, before making their new physical home pre-pandemic in The Mary Rodgers Room at The Dramatists Guild in 2018. Feature Readings and Community Nights are two ways that Blackboard supports the development of new work by Black Playwrights. Blackboard was founded by Garlia Cornelia Jones.

www.blackboardplays.com

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