

For Immediate Release
March 12, 2024

PAIGE EVANS TO STEP DOWN AS SIGNATURE THEATRE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Photo Credit: Marc J. Franklin

Signature Theatre today announced that Artistic Director **Paige Evans** will step down in June, having led the company since 2016, through the transition from the institution's Founder, James Houghton, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

At Signature, Evans has produced eight seasons of award-winning and critically-acclaimed shows and brought gifted writers to Signature for its distinctive residencies, including **Melis Aker, Stephen Adly Guirgis, Samuel D. Hunter, Dave Malloy** (Signature's first musical theater writer), **Dominique Morisseau, Lynn Nottage, Sarah Ruhl, Anna Deavere Smith, Lauren Yee**, and the **Mad Ones**.

Signature playwright-in-residence **Anna Deavere Smith** says of Evans, "I loved working with Paige during the remounting of my plays *Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight*. Her searing and perceptive intelligence were invaluable. We need allies in the trenches of art production. I am grateful that she is one of mine."

"As a director, resident writer, and trustee at Signature, I'm filled with enduring gratitude for Paige's tenacious stewardship these past eight years," says **Lila Neugebauer**. "Her commitment to artists is uniquely steadfast, characterized by a genuine belief in the value of creative risk-taking. Her resilience and indefatigable spirit have been invaluable to Signature's very survival in the face of the pandemic's challenges. Paige is a leader of courage, mettle, and integrity, and I cannot wait to see what she does next."

Under Evans' leadership, breakthrough plays and musicals have been recognized with the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, Obie, Drama Desk, Audelco, and Lortel Awards, as well as the NY Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play, and the 50/50 Award for Gender Parity. Signature productions during her tenure have also been recognized annually in *The New York Times*' "Best of Theater" lists.

During the COVID-19 shutdown, **Katori Hall's** *The Hot Wing King* was awarded the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, following Signature's world premiere production. As the theater emerged from the pandemic, Signature's productions of **Dave Malloy's** *Octet* (its first musical), Anna Deavere Smith's reimagined *Twilight: Los Angeles*, and Lauren Yee's *Cambodian Rock Band* transferred to theaters around the country.

Throughout her time at Signature, Evans has built on core values of community, celebrating diversity in the American theater and supporting playwrights and their unique bodies of work. She launched several new artistic programs, including an **Education Program** for high school and college students, **SigSpace** lobby programming and, with generous support of former **Trustee Pablo Salame** and the estate of **Judith Champion**, the groundbreaking **LaunchPad Residency** for early career writers from historically underrepresented communities.

Signature Theatre Board Chair Edward Norton says, “My gratitude to Paige and admiration for her leadership of Signature will be everlasting. Nobody who signs up for the adventure and fun of running a dynamic theater company expects it to turn into an existential fight for survival due to a global pandemic. But you really learn what people are made of when things get tough, and Paige’s fortitude and creativity and tireless spirit never wavered. How lucky we have been to work with her and how lucky all her partners in future adventures in theater will be.”

Evans has also played an instrumental role in fundraising and budgetary reductions, and she launched a successful fundraising campaign during Covid with a galvanizing major gift from Pablo Salame. Edward Norton and other Signature Trustees also made generous gifts to help Signature through the pandemic. Together with **Executive Director Timothy J. McClimon**, Evans has reinvigorated and rebuilt Signature’s Board of Trustees, adding eight new members in the past year alone.

Former Signature Trustee Pablo Salame says of Evans, “Paige is one of a kind. During her tenure she provided theatergoers thrilling access to a wide range of voices while supporting those voices to fully realize their visions. Her methods couple a quiet effectiveness with exquisite artistic taste and utmost personal integrity. Paige’s dedication to Signature during a period of intense personal tragedy epitomized her love for the institution. As a theater fan I look forward to witnessing her next chapter.”

Before Signature, Evans served as the first Artistic Director of LCT3, launching a new space that brought new artists and audiences to Lincoln Center Theater. As Artistic Director of LCT3, Evans produced more than 20 premieres, which won Lortel, Obie, Audelco and Drama Desk Awards, as well as the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. In 2013, two LCT3 premieres were recognized by the Pulitzer committee and transferred to larger theaters: Ayad Akhtar’s *Disgraced* won the Pulitzer, a first for Lincoln Center Theater, and moved to Broadway; and Amy Herzog’s *4000 Miles*, a Pulitzer finalist, transferred to LCT’s Mitzi Newhouse Theater for an extended run. Evans also brought many talented directors, including Lileana Blain-Cruz, Rachel Chavkin, Sam Gold, Lila Neugebauer, and Rebecca Taichman, to Lincoln Center Theater.

Before LCT3, Evans served as Associate Artistic Director at Manhattan Theatre Club, where she commissioned, developed and produced many world premieres, including Tarrell Alvin McCraney’s

Choir Boy, and nurtured four Pulitzer Prize-winning plays: Lynn Nottage's *Ruined*, David Lindsay-Abaire's *Rabbit Hole*, David Auburn's *Proof*, and John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt*. Both *Doubt* and *Proof* transferred to Broadway and won Tony Awards for Best Play.

Evans' decades of developing and premiering new work with playwrights made her a strong fit for Signature's distinct mission of producing bodies of work by its resident writers.

Evans comments, "I've been profoundly privileged to serve Signature's extraordinary community of artists, Board, colleagues, audiences and donors over the past eight years. I'm deeply grateful to them all and proud of everything we've accomplished together. Now, having led Signature through challenging transitions and achieved what I set out to do artistically, it's time for me to reflect, work on freelance projects for the first time in my career, and take on new opportunities."

Signature will announce its 2024-25 season, including world premieres by **Melis Aker**, **Dominique Morisseau**, and **Samuel D. Hunter**, soon.

About Signature Theatre

Signature Theatre is an artistic home for storytellers. By producing several plays from each Resident Writer, Signature continues its deep dive into their bodies of work.

Signature serves its mission by hosting distinctive resident playwrights and cultural communities at its permanent home at The Pershing Square Signature Center, a three-theater facility on West 42nd Street designed by Frank Gehry Architects. At the Center, which opened in January 2012, Signature continues its original Playwright-in-Residence model with Spotlight Residency, an intensive exploration of a single writer's body of work. The Premiere Residency, the only program of its kind, supports playwrights as they build a body of work by guaranteeing each writer three productions over a five-year period. The Legacy Program, launched during Signature's 10th Anniversary, invites writers from both residencies to premiere or restage earlier plays. Inaugurated in 2022, the LaunchPad Residency seeks to advance an early-career playwright's voice, body of work, and professional development. In 2020, Signature launched SigSpace, to bring free artistic programming to the Center's public spaces and more fully activate Signature's lobby as a free public workspace and social hub for New York artists.

The Pershing Square Signature Center is a major contribution to New York City's cultural landscape. The Center supports and encourages collaboration among artists, cultural organizations and local communities by providing free, public access throughout the space. In addition to its three intimate theaters, the Center features a studio theater, a rehearsal studio and a public café, bar and bookstore.

Founded in 1991 by James Houghton, Signature Theatre is now led by Artistic Director Paige Evans and Executive Director Timothy J. McClimon. Signature's Resident Playwrights include: Edward Albee, Annie Baker, Lee Blessing, Martha Clarke, Will Eno, Horton Foote, María Irene Fornés, Athol Fugard, John Guare, Stephen Adly Guirgis, A.R. Gurney, Katori Hall, Quiara Alegría Hudes, Samuel D. Hunter, David Henry Hwang, Bill Irwin, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Adrienne Kennedy, Tony Kushner, Romulus Linney, Kenneth Lonergan, Dave Malloy, Charles Mee, Arthur Miller, Dominique Morisseau, Lynn Nottage, Suzan-Lori Parks, Sarah Ruhl, Sam Shepard, Anna Deavere Smith, Regina Taylor, Paula Vogel, Naomi Wallace, August Wilson, Lanford Wilson, Lauren Yee, The Mad Ones, and members of the historic Negro Ensemble Company: Charles Fuller, Leslie Lee, and Samm-Art Williams.

Signature and its artists have been recognized with Tony Awards, Pulitzer Prizes, MacArthur "Genius" grants, and Lucille Lortel, Obie, Drama Desk, AUDELCO, and Artios Awards as well as the 50/50 Award for Gender Parity in Theatre, among many other distinctions. In 2014, Signature became the first New York City theater to receive the Regional Theatre Tony Award for its body of work and accomplishments as an institution. For more information, please visit signaturetheatre.org.

The groundbreaking Signature Access (formerly the Signature Ticket Initiative), which in 2019 celebrated its one millionth ticket sold, guarantees affordable tickets to every Signature production through 2032. Serving as a model for theaters and performing arts organizations across the country, the Initiative was founded in 2005 and is made possible, in part, by Lead Partner The Pershing Square Foundation.

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