

## THE PUBLIC THEATER KICKS OFF PUBLIC FORUM SEASON WITH NEW DRAMA CLUB SERIES

*LIFE BY ASPHYXIATION* by Kia Corthron  
*ONLY WE WHO GUARD THE MYSTERY SHALL BE UNHAPPY*  
by Tony Kushner  
*THE LONG CHRISTMAS DINNER* by Thornton Wilder

The One-Night-Only Readings and Discussions Include Lisa Kron,  
Rachel Maddow, Elizabeth Marvel, Wendell Pierce, Douglas Rushkoff,  
Anne-Marie Slaughter, and More

September 17, 2013 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) will kick off the fourth season of **PUBLIC FORUM** with the new series Drama Club, a book club for plays that will feature one-night-only readings and discussions of works by **Kia Corthron**, **Tony Kushner**, and **Thornton Wilder** at Joe's Pub. Curated by Jeremy McCarter, the popular **PUBLIC FORUM** series presents the theater of ideas: conversations and performances with leading voices in politics, media, and the arts.

In **PUBLIC FORUM** Drama Club, authors, musicians, journalists, scholars, and actors will come together to give onstage readings of one-act plays that have some special resonance in our lives today. Each reading will conclude with a discussion of the hard questions that the play raises about our politics, our culture, and the way we live now.

"Public Forum continually seeks new ways to bring the most insightful people in American life into contact with the great works of dramatic literature," said **Public Forum Director Jeremy McCarter**. "With Drama Club, we're knocking down whatever remains of the wall that divides them, inviting intellectuals to take part in the public reading of a play, and asking theater artists to contribute to the ensuing conversation about why the play speaks to the most urgent questions of our times."

On **Sunday, October 20 at 7:00 p.m.**, Kia Corthron's 1995 play, *Life by Asphyxiation*, will be read and discussed by **Wendell Pierce** (*The Wire*), **Kirk Bloodworth**, the first man exonerated from death row based on DNA evidence, and others. Corthron's play tells the story of Jojo, a black man on death row for raping and murdering a white girl decades earlier. He is visited by her ghost, and Nat Turner is locked up in the cell next door. After reading the play, the cast will tackle the hard questions it raises about race, justice, mercy, friendship, and the death penalty.

The next Drama Club reading and discussion will be Tony Kushner's *Only We Who Guard the Mystery Shall Be Unhappy* on **Sunday, November 3 at 7:00 p.m.**, featuring **Rachel Maddow** and **Elizabeth Marvel**. In this timely, provocative 2003 play, First Lady Laura Bush reads a passage from Dostoyevsky to Iraqi children who were killed in American air strikes. Afterwards, the cast will discuss the morality of U.S. foreign policy and the extent to which we share responsibility for our leaders' actions.

The final Drama Club program, just in time for the holiday season, features Thornton Wilder's classic 1931 one-act *The Long Christmas Dinner* on **Tuesday, December 10 at 7:00 p.m.** It will be read and discussed by actor/playwright **Lisa Kron**; media theorist **Douglas Rushkoff**; Thornton Wilder's nephew and literary executor, **Tappan Wilder**; **Anne-Marie Slaughter**, the president and CEO of the New America Foundation and author of the recent cover story in *The Atlantic* about trying to have it all; her son, **Edward Moravcsik**; and more. Wilder's ingenious, heartbreaking play traces 90 years in the life of an American family, and will spark a discussion about family and storytelling in a society that's rapidly accelerating.

Public Theater Member tickets for the fall **PUBLIC FORUM** Drama Club series at Joe's Pub are on sale now. Single tickets, starting at \$40, go on sale Monday, September 23 and can be purchased at **(212) 967-7555**, [www.publictheater.org](http://www.publictheater.org), or in person at the Taub Box Office at The Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street. **The Library at The Public** is open nightly for food and drink, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

**PUBLIC FORUM**, now in its fourth year, presents the theater of ideas. Curated by Jeremy McCarter, this series of conversations and performances features leading voices in politics, media, and the arts. Alec Baldwin, Anne Hathaway, Cynthia Nixon, Michael Stuhlbarg, Sam Waterston, and former NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman have hosted its programs, which have featured the insights of Kurt Andersen, Carl Bernstein, David Brooks, Mary Schmidt Campbell, Nathan Englander, Hendrik Hertzberg, Arianna Huffington, Bill Irwin, Tony Kushner, Suzan-Lori Parks, Francine Prose, Reihan Salam, Michael Sandel, David Simon, Anna Deavere Smith, Ben Smith, Stephen Sondheim, Damian Woetzel, the culture writers of *New York Magazine*, and young veterans of the war in Afghanistan - plus performances by Alan Alda, Christine Baranski, Michael Cerveris, Matt Damon, Michael Friedman, Gabriel Kahane, and Vanessa Redgrave, among others.

**KIA CORTHRON's** plays have been produced in New York by Playwrights Horizons, Ensemble Studio Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, Atlantic Theater Company, Manhattan Theatre Club, American Place; in London by the Royal Court and Donmar Warehouse; regionally by Minneapolis' Children's Theatre, ATL/Humana, Mark Taper Forum, Alabama Shakespeare, Yale Rep, Huntington, New York Stage & Film, Baltimore's Center Stage, Goodman, Hartford Stage, among others. Her awards include a Lee Reynolds Award, a Bellagio Residency (Italy), a Dora Maar Residency (France), MacDowell Colony, Siena Arts Visiting Artist (Italy), McKnight National Residency, Wachtmeister Award, Columbia/Goodman Fellowship, MacLean Foundation Award, Daryl Roth Creative Spirit Award, Fadiman, NEA, Kennedy Center Fund, New Professional Theatre Award, Callaway; in television Writers Guild and Edgar Allan Poe awards for "The Wire." Corthron is a Dramatists Guild Council and New Dramatists alumnus.

**TONY KUSHNER's** plays include *A Bright Room Called Day*, *Angels in America, Parts One and Two; Slavs!*; *Homebody/Kabul*, the musical *Caroline, or Change* and the opera *A Blizzard on Marblehead Neck*, both with composer Jeanine Tesori; and *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide To Capitalism And Socialism With A Key To The Scriptures*. He has adapted and translated Pierre Corneille's *The Illusion*, S.Y. Ansky's *The Dybbuk*, Bertolt Brecht's *The Good Person of Sezuan* and *Mother Courage and Her Children*; and the English-language libretto for the opera *Brundibár* by Hans Krasa. He wrote the screenplays for Mike Nichols' film of *Angels In America*, and for Steven Spielberg's *Munich* and *Lincoln*. His books include *Brundibar*, with illustrations by Maurice Sendak; *The Art of Maurice Sendak, 1980 to the Present*; and *Wrestling With Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Palestinian/Israeli Conflict*, co-edited with Alisa Solomon. Kushner is the recipient of a Pulitzer Prize, two Tony Awards, three Obie Awards, two Evening Standard Awards, an Olivier Award, an Emmy Award, two Oscar nominations, and the Steinberg Distinguished Playwright Award, among other honors.

**THORNTON WILDER** (1897-1975) was an accomplished novelist and playwright whose works explore the connection between the commonplace and the cosmic dimensions of human experience. *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, one of his seven novels, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1927, and his next-to-last novel, *The Eighth Day* received the National Book Award (1968). Two of his four major plays garnered Pulitzer Prizes, *Our Town* (1938) and *The Skin of Our Teeth* (1943). His play, *The Matchmaker* ran on Broadway for 486 performances (1955-1957), Wilder's Broadway record, and was later adapted into the record-breaking musical *Hello, Dolly!* Wilder also enjoyed enormous success with many other forms of the

written and spoken word, among them translation, acting, opera librettos, lecturing, teaching and film (his screenplay for Alfred Hitchcock's 1943 psycho-thriller, *Shadow of a Doubt* remains a classic to this day). Penelope Niven's definitive biography, *Thornton Wilder: A Life*, was published in October 2012.

### **ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER AT ASTOR PLACE**

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Oskar Eustis and Executive Director Patrick Willingham, The Public Theater is the only theater in New York that produces Shakespeare, the classics, musicals, and contemporary and experimental works in equal measure. The Public continues the work of its visionary founder, Joe Papp, by acting as an advocate for the theater as an essential cultural force, and leading and framing dialogue on some of the most important issues of our day. Creating theater for one of the largest and most diverse audience bases in New York City for nearly 60 years, today the Company engages audiences in a variety of venues—including its landmark downtown home at Astor Place, which houses five theaters and Joe's Pub; the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, home to its beloved, free Shakespeare in the Park; and the Mobile Unit, which tours Shakespearean and other classic productions for underserved audiences throughout New York City's five boroughs. The Public's wide range of programming includes free Shakespeare in the Park, the bedrock of the Company's dedication to making theater accessible to all, new and experimental stagings at The Public at Astor Place, and a range of artist and audience development initiatives including its Public Forum series, which brings together theater artists and professionals from a variety of disciplines for discussions that shed light on social issues explored in Public productions. The Public Theater is located on property owned by the City of New York and receives annual support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; and in October 2012 the landmark building downtown at Astor Place was revitalized to physically manifest the Company's core mission of sparking new dialogues and increasing accessibility for artists and audiences, by dramatically opening up the building to the street and community, and transforming the lobby into a public piazza for artists, students, and audiences. Key elements of the revitalization included infrastructure updates to the 158-year old building, including changes to the main entry, expanded lobby, additional restrooms, and the addition of a new lounge, The Library at The Public, designed by the Rockwell Group. The LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust provides leadership support for The Public Theater's year-round activities. [www.publictheater.org](http://www.publictheater.org)

### **TICKET INFORMATION**

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There is no food or drink minimum in Joe's Pub for the **PUBLIC FOURM** Drama Club series. Please note the final line-up is subject to change.

The Public Theater is located at 425 Lafayette Street. For more information, visit [www.publictheater.org](http://www.publictheater.org)

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