

The Public Theater Announces Two Exciting Public Forum Duets About Music This February

**David Byrne and Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson
February 26 at NYU Skirball Center**

**Wynton Marsalis and Suzan-Lori Parks
February 28 at Joe’s Pub at The Public**

February 5, 2013 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced the line-up today for two Public Forum Duets this February, kicking off the spring Public Forum season with an intense focus on music and the way it shapes our lives.

On Tuesday, February 26 at 8 p.m., **David Byrne** (author, Rock and Roll Hall of Famer, co-founder of Talking Heads) and **Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson** (drummer, DJ, culinary entrepreneur, member of The Roots) come together for a one-on-one conversation. They will discuss what we’re taught--and how we learn--about music, and the way that our ideas shape the songs we create and consume. Questlove is teaching a course on classic albums at NYU this spring. This exciting Public Forum event, co-presented by NYU Skirball Center, will take place at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts (566 LaGuardia Place). Member tickets are on sale now. Single tickets, priced at \$35, go on sale Tuesday, February 12.

On Thursday, February 28 at 9 p.m., **Wynton Marsalis** (Pulitzer and Grammy-winning composer, musician, author, and Managing and Artistic Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center) and **Suzan-Lori Parks** (*Topdog/Underdog*, *Porgy and Bess*, Master Writer Chair of The Public Theater) will discuss music and American identity – the way that the songs we sing have been part of our nation and our character. This intimate evening will take place at Joe’s Pub at The Public. Member tickets are on sale now. Single tickets, priced at \$35, go on sale Tuesday, February 12.

Now in its third year, **PUBLIC FORUM** presents the theater of ideas. Curated by Jeremy McCarter, this series of lectures, 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, Jay McInerney, Suzan-Lori Parks, Francine Prose, Reihan Salam, David Simon, Anna Deveare Smith, Ben Smith, Stephen Sondheim, Emma Straub, Sam Tanenhaus, Marc Tracy, Damian Woetzel, the culture writers of *New York Magazine*, and young veterans of the war in Afghanistan - plus performances by Anne Hathaway, Michael Friedman, Gabriel Kahane, and Michael Cerveris, among others.

Each **PUBLIC FORUM DUET** brings together an artist who has been vital to The Public Theater and a leading voice from the worlds of politics, media, or the arts. Last fall, to mark the presidential election, the Forum's Duet series focused on politics: **Alec Baldwin** ("30 Rock," "Here's the Thing," *Macbeth* at The Public) talked about the theater of politics and the presidential race with **David Brooks** (*The New York Times*, *Bobos in Paradise*); **David Simon** ("The Wire") and **Anna Deavere Smith** (*Fires in the Mirror*; *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*) traded views on hurricanes and city life; and **Tony Kushner** (*Intelligent Homosexual's Guide...*, *Angels in America*, *Lincoln*) and **Rachel Maddow** (MSNBC's "The Rachel Maddow Show") discussed the state of the American left, the joys of needlepoint, and more.

DAVID BYRNE is a Scottish-born Rock and Roll Hall of Famer and cofounder of Talking Heads. He has been the recipient of many awards, including an Oscar and a Golden Globe. He is the author of *Bicycle Diaries* and *The New Sins*.

WYNTON MARSALIS is the Managing and Artistic Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center. He is an internationally acclaimed musician, composer, bandleader, educator and a leading advocate of American culture. Born in New Orleans, Louisiana, he made his recording debut as a leader in 1982, and has recorded more than 70 jazz and classical recordings, which have won him nine Grammy awards. Wynton became the first jazz artist to be awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prize in music, for his oratorio *Blood on the Fields*, which was commissioned by Jazz at Lincoln Center. By creating and performing an expansive range of brilliant new music for quartets to big bands, chamber music ensembles to symphony orchestras, tap dance to ballet, Wynton has expanded the vocabulary for jazz and created a vital body of work that places him among the world's finest musicians and composers. He helped lead the effort to construct Jazz at Lincoln Center's new home – Frederick P. Rose Hall – the first education, performance, and broadcast facility devoted to jazz, which opened in October 2004.

SUZAN-LORI PARKS is a playwright, novelist, essayist, performer and songwriter. She wrote *Topdog/Underdog* for which she won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, becoming the first African-American woman to do so. Named one of *Time* magazine's "100 Innovators for the Next New Wave," Parks' plays include *The Book of Grace*, *In the Blood* (2000 Pulitzer Prize finalist), *Venus* (1996 OBIE Award), *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*, *Fucking A*, and *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom* (1990 OBIE Award for Best New American Play). She also adapted the book for the 2011 revival of *The Gershwin's Porgy and Bess*, which won the 2012 Tony Award for Best Revival. Parks also performs *Watch Me Work*, her experimental performance piece/writing workshop, in theatres throughout United States and abroad. In 2003, she wrote a play a day and in 2007, her project *365 Days/365 Plays* was produced in over 700 theaters worldwide, creating one of the largest grassroots collaborations in theater history. Parks is a MacArthur "Genius" Award recipient and has been honored with grants and awards from many other institutions. She's written screenplays for Brad Pitt, Denzel Washington and Jodie Foster, among others. She wrote the screenplay *Girl 6*, which was directed by Spike Lee, and adapted Zora Neale Hurston's classic novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which starred Halle Berry and premiered on ABC's "Oprah Winfrey Presents." Parks' first novel, *Getting Mother's Body*, is published by Random House. A former writing student of James Baldwin, with whom she credits the launch of her interest in playwrighting, Parks is an alumna of Mount Holyoke College and New Dramatists. Her work is the subject of the PBS film, *The Topdog Diaries*. She is at work on her second novel, as well as working on a new play. Parks teaches at NYU and is in residence at The Public Theater, where she serves as Master Writer Chair.

AHMIR "QUESTLOVE" THOMPSON, a drummer, DJ, producer, culinary entrepreneur, and member of The Roots, is the unmistakable heartbeat of Philadelphia's most influential hip-hop group. He is also the musical director for "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon," where his beloved Roots crew serves as house band. The four-time Grammy Award-winning ensemble was just nominated for Best Rap Album for the 2011 release of *undun*. Beyond that, this Grammy Award-winning musician's indisputable reputation has landed him musical director positions with everyone from D'Angelo to Eminem to Jay-Z. Recently making his way into the culinary world with his signature "Love's Drumstick," Questlove began his own culinary quest with off-premise catering, featuring Creole and Korean inspired soul food with a focus on locally sourced ingredients and "on-a-stick" decadence, for high-profile exclusive events. Most recently he

teamed up with Chef Graham Elliot to create “Quest Loves Food” powered by Graham Elliot, a bold new brand of catering featuring out-of-the-box artistry, high concept design, and one-of-a-kind “food origami.” “Quest Loves Food” is driven by an uncompromising commitment to entertain, excite, and surprise with every bite while wowing clients – and their guests – with imaginative and artistic presentation combinations that redefine the art of food and music.

NYU SKIRBALL CENTER

The Jack H. Skirball Center for the Performing Arts is the premier venue for the presentation of cultural and performing arts events for New York University and lower Manhattan. Led by executive producer Jay Oliva (President Emeritus, NYU) and senior director Michael Harrington, the programs of the Skirball Center reflect NYU's mission as an international center of scholarship, defined by excellence and innovation and shaped by an intellectually rich and diverse environment. A vital aspect of the Center's mission is to build young adult audiences for the future of live performance. www.nyuskirball.org

ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER'S DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Completed in October 2012, the revitalization of The Public Theater's downtown home at Astor Place physically manifests the Company's core mission of sparking new dialogues and increasing accessibility for artists and audiences by dramatically opening up its landmark building to the street and community, and transforming the lobby into a public piazza for artists, students, and audiences. Designed by Ennead Architects and constructed by Westerman Construction, the project encompasses enhancements to the building's interior and exterior while preserving the historic structure. Key elements of the design include infrastructure updates to the 158-year old building, as well as construction of new exterior entry stair and glass canopy; installation of ramps for improved accessibility; an expanded and refurbished lobby; the addition of a mezzanine level with a new lounge, The Library at The Public, designed by the Rockwell Group; expansion and remodeling of restroom facilities; and comprehensive exterior restoration, ensuring stability of the landmark façade.

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 and the classics, musicals, contemporary and experimental pieces 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 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. www.publictheater.org

TICKET INFORMATION

Public Theater Member tickets, priced at \$25, are on sale now for the **David Byrne and Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson Public Forum Duet** on Tuesday, February 26 at 8 p.m. at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts (566 LaGuardia Place). Single tickets, priced at \$35, go on sale Tuesday, February 12, and can be purchased at **(212) 352-3101**, nyuskirball.org, or in person at the box office at 566 LaGuardia Place.

Public Theater Member tickets, priced at \$25, are also on sale now for the **Wynton Marsalis and Suzan-Lori Parks Public Forum Duet** on Thursday, February 28 at 9 p.m. at Joe’s Pub at The Public Theater. Single tickets, priced at \$35, go on sale Tuesday, February 12. Single tickets can be purchased at **(212) 967-7555**, www.publictheater.org, or in person at The Public Theater at Astor Place box office at 425 Lafayette Street. **The Library at The Public** is open nightly for food and drink, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

The Public Theater is located at 425 Lafayette Street. For more information, visit www.publictheater.org

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