

THE PUBLIC THEATER ANNOUNCES NEW COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVE PUBLIC WORKS

Groundbreaking Inaugural Program
To Create Free Original Musical Adaptation Of
THE TEMPEST
Directed By Lear deBessonet
At The Delacorte Theater

200 New Yorkers From All Five Boroughs
Will Share The Stage
With Professional Actors and Community Partners
For This Three-Night Civic Event
September 6-8

April 9, 2013 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced a groundbreaking new initiative for community-based theater, **PUBLIC WORKS**, that is designed to cultivate new connections and new models of engagement with artists, audiences and the community each year. In its inaugural year, **PUBLIC WORKS** will create an extraordinary example of participatory theater with a free, original musical adaptation of *THE TEMPEST* at the Delacorte Theater, inspired by a 1916 community theatrical event of *Caliban by the Yellow Sands* at the stadium at City College in New York.

Conceived and directed by **Public Works Director Lear deBessonet**, *THE TEMPEST* will showcase 200 New Yorkers from all five boroughs who will share the stage with professional actors and community partners for this three-night civic event, September 6 through September 8. *THE TEMPEST* will be free, continuing The Public Theater's long-standing tradition of free Shakespeare in the Park and community engagement.

"Theater isn't a commodity, it's an experience," said **Artistic Director Oskar Eustis**. "Public Works aims to reclaim that territory by making participation central to the theatrical event. This is one of the most exciting initiatives The Public has ever embarked upon."

PUBLIC WORKS is a major new initiative of The Public Theater that exemplifies our mission to reach all corners of the city and increase access to a broad and diverse audience. Working with community partner organizations in all five boroughs, **PUBLIC WORKS** seeks to cultivate new connections and new models of engagement with artists, audiences and the community each year. The new initiative is designed to bring community partners from all five boroughs into the full life of The Public through

workshops, classes, dialogues, invitations to shows at The Public, visits from the Mobile Shakespeare Unit and the creation of projects that include dance, music, sonnets, plays and participatory theater.

The five community partner organizations of **PUBLIC WORKS** for the first two years are **Children's Aid Society** (Manhattan); **DreamYard** (Bronx); **Fortune Society** (Queens); **Brownsville Recreation Center** (Brooklyn); and **Domestic Workers United** (all boroughs, including Staten Island).

As part of the inaugural year of **PUBLIC WORKS**, these five community partners have already engaged in a variety of immersive Public Theater programs, including a 12-week acting workshop on the work of Stephen Adly Guirgis that included a talk back with the playwright; a workshop on "Jobs in the Theater"; a weekly senior citizen dance class led by a Public Theater artist; acting workshops for youth on performing Shakespeare, led by artists from The Public's Shakespeare Lab; a Joe's Pub performance with Public Theater alumna Sasha Allen; tickets to Public Theater productions; writing workshops to create sonnets; and monthly reading groups of different classic plays, explored in both English and Spanish.

For **THE TEMPEST**, participants from these community groups will be cast in lead and ensemble roles; learn a dance that they will perform at the Delacorte; and sing a song written specifically for them by composer Todd Almond for the Shakespeare production.

"Public Works is an opportunity to celebrate the vibrancy of New York City," said **Public Works Director Lear deBessonnet**. "In this first year we've joined with five organizations that embody some of the most innovative approaches to community building. Together we are shaping a vision of how theater can transform a community and enrich the civic life of our city."

The Public Theater, founded nearly 60 years ago by Joe Papp as one of the nation's first nonprofit theaters, has been an advocate for theater as an essential cultural force and forum for dialogue about issues of the day. As the only theater in New York producing Shakespeare and the classics, musicals, contemporary and experimental works in equal measure, The Public continues its long tradition of engaging a wide range of audiences and artists.

Bank of America continues its leadership sponsorship in support of The Public's mission to keep Shakespeare in the Park free.

ABOUT PUBLIC WORKS' THE TEMPEST:

In 1916, a community theatrical event entitled *Caliban by the Yellow Sands* with Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as the inspiration, took place at the stadium at City College in New York. The intent was to unite New Yorkers of all classes and all beliefs, and the production featured some of the best-known professional actors of the day alongside 1,500 community members who participated in a series of pageant and dance interludes, and was a great success.

Inspired by this extraordinary community event, The Public Theater will produce a 21st century version of this event in September for free at the Delacorte Theater with our community partners as well as guest performers and professional actors. DeBessonnet has created large-scale theatrical events across the country to great acclaim, most recently *Don Quixote* in Philadelphia and *The Odyssey* in San Diego. **THE TEMPEST** will feature original music composed by **Todd Almond**.

To form the community ensemble, The Public will hold open auditions with our five primary community partners at each group's space. In the five weeks leading up to the show, this ensemble will rehearse three times a week. On the week of the show, rehearsals will be every day. **THE TEMPEST** will also feature cameo performances from five community art groups that have a strong artistic and cultural tradition.

The Public Theater's free Shakespeare in the Park continues to be the bedrock of the Company's mission to increase access with productions this summer of ***THE COMEDY OF ERRORS, LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST, A NEW MUSICAL*** and the three-night Public Works event, ***THE TEMPEST***. Since the opening of the Delacorte Theater in Central Park in 1962, more than five million people have enjoyed more than 150 free productions of Shakespeare and other classical works and musicals.

ABOUT PUBLIC WORKS:

PUBLIC WORKS is a major new initiative of The Public Theater that seeks to engage the people of New York by making them creators and not just spectators. Working with community partner organizations in all five boroughs, **PUBLIC WORKS** will invite members of diverse communities to participate in theater workshops, to attend classes, to attend productions, and to become involved in the daily life of The Public. Under the leadership of Public Works Director Lear deBessonet, **PUBLIC WORKS** will deliberately blur the line between professional artists and community members: it will create theater that is not only for the people, but *by* and *of* the people as well.

PUBLIC WORKS exemplifies The Public's long-standing commitment to community engagement that is at the core of the theater's mission. It is animated by the idea that theater is a place of possibility, where the boundaries that separate us from each other in the rest of life can fall away. It seeks to create a space where we can not only reflect on the world as is, but where we can actually propose new possibilities for what our society might be.

The five community partner organizations working with The Public for the first two years of **PUBLIC WORKS** will take part in the full range of Public Theater programming: Emerging Writers Group, Under the Radar, the Shakespeare Initiative, Shakespeare in the Park, Public Forum, and the Mobile Shakespeare Unit. Projects created by these community partners will be seen on all of The Public's stages, from Joe's Pub to the Delacorte Theater.

FORTUNE SOCIETY (Queens) supports successful reentry from prison for adults and promotes alternatives to incarceration programs for youth as well as holistic educational and community-building services. As part of Public Works, members are participating in a full year of immersive theater workshops where they will be introduced to the different aspects of theater through bi-weekly classes in playwriting, acting, and production. In the summer of 2012, The Fortune Society received the Mobile Shakespeare Unit tour of *Richard III*. Building on the interest generated by the performance, Lear deBessonet led a 12-week acting workshop in the fall, focusing on the work of Playwright Stephen Adly Guirgis. Guirgis attended the final presentation of the class and led a talk back with participants. Public Theater production manager Elizabeth Moreau also conducted a workshop at The Fortune Society on "Jobs in the Theater" and The Public Theater presented a reading of Tarell Alvin McCraney's *The Brothers Size* to launch the winter acting classes, which will continue through the spring up until ***THE TEMPEST*** production work begins.

BROWNSVILLE RECREATION CENTER (Brooklyn) is a branch of the New York City Parks Department. With extensive resources for youth and seniors, the center offers a vibrant space to tap into pursuits artistic and athletic alike. As part of Public Works, senior citizens participate in a weekly dance class led by an artist from The Public. Over the course of the year, the seniors will learn a dance which they will perform in ***THE TEMPEST*** in September at the Delacorte Theater and perform a dance recital in the spring to share work from their dance class led by Chanon Judson. The Brownsville Recreation Center received the Mobile Shakespeare Unit tour of *Richard III* in the summer of 2012.

THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY (Manhattan) helps children in poverty to succeed and thrive by providing comprehensive support and critical services to children and their families in targeted high-needs New York City neighborhoods. As part of Public Works, the Children's Aid Society Chorus (a group of 16 teenage girls led by CAS Staff Member Kelly Campbell) will attend a show at Joe's Pub every month. In December 2012, they were invited by Sasha Allen to perform with her at her Joe's Pub concert. The group also attended a special one-act matinee of *Into the Woods* in August 2012, with

preparatory workshops beforehand created by The Public Theater staff. This spring, the teenage girls will do a workshop with Todd Almond, the composer of **THE TEMPEST**, who will write a special song for them for the production.

DREAMYARD (Bronx) was recently recognized by President Obama with a 2012 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award. The organization provides transformative arts education for youth in the Bronx through school-based and out-of-school programs and supports young people as they work toward higher learning, meaningful careers and social action. As part of Public Works, 20 youth are participating in workshops in performing Shakespeare, led by artists from The Public's Shakespeare Lab. In partnership with The Public Theater's Public Forum, students from DreamYard will participate in a writing workshop to create their own sonnets. The group also attends performances in The Public's season.

DOMESTIC WORKERS UNITED (all boroughs, including Staten Island) is a city-wide organization of Caribbean, Latina and African nannies, housekeepers, and elderly caregivers in New York, organizing for power, respect, and fair labor standards, and to help build a movement to end exploitation and oppression for all. As part of Public Works, members participate in a monthly reading group where 12 women read and discuss a different classic play each session. The plays are explored in both English and Spanish. Members also attend performances at The Public on a monthly basis.

LEAR DeBESSONET (Public Works Director/*The Tempest* Director) has created large-scale theatrical events pairing artistic excellence with community organizing in New York, Philadelphia, San Diego, and Kazakhstan. Recent work includes *Good Person of Szechwan* featuring Taylor Mac (Foundry Theatre), Sherie Rene Scott's *Piece of Meat* at 54 Below, *On the Levee* for Lincoln Center Theater/LCT3 (*Time Out* Best of 2010) and *The Odyssey* at the Old Globe, a community-based collaboration featuring professional artists alongside 180 San Diegans. In May 2009, her *Don Quixote*, a collaboration with homeless shelter Broad Street Ministry, premiered in Philadelphia (*Philadelphia Weekly* Best of 2009). Other credits include *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* (PS122), Toshi Reagon's *LINES* (Joe's Pub), *Takarazuka* (Clubbed Thumb), *Monstrosity* (13P), *The Scarlet Letter* (Intiman Theatre), *transFigures* (Women's Project), *In the Dark Ages* (National Opera Theatre of Kazakhstan), and *When I Was a Ghost* (Guthrie Theater). For Ten Thousand Things, she has directed productions of *My Fair Lady* and *As You Like It* that toured to prisons, community centers, and homeless shelters in Minneapolis. She created and ran the TICKETS FOR THE PEOPLE program in New York, an initiative designed to distribute tickets to non-traditional theatre-goers including immigrants, students, and seniors. In 2006 she was named one of *Time Out New York's* "25 People to Watch," and in 2008 she was honored with LMCC's Presidential Award for Artistic Excellence. A recipient of an NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Directors, she has also acted as a visiting professor at NYU-Tisch School of the Arts.

TODD ALMOND (*The Tempest* Composer) is a composer, lyricist and playwright. His musicals include *Girlfriend* (Berkeley Rep., and Actors Theatre of Louisville, with songwriter Matthew Sweet, dir: Les Waters); *Melancholy Play* (13P, with playwright Sarah Ruhl, dir: Davis McCallum); *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (Yale Repertory Theater, with playwright Adam Bock, dir: Anne Kauffman); *On The Levee* (Lincoln Center Theater, dir: Lear deBessonet); and *The Odyssey* (The Old Globe, dir: Lear deBessonet). Almond music-directed and arranged Sherie Rene Scott's hit show *Piece of Meat* (54 Below and Hippodrome in London, dir: Lear deBessonet). He was recently awarded the Frederick Loewe award for his new musical *Iowa* (with playwright Jenny Schwartz) and, this summer, he will be releasing a new album of original songs entitled *Them Fireworks*.

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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. The LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust provides leadership support for The Public Theater's year-round activities. www.publictheater.org

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