

**THE PUBLIC THEATER
ANNOUNCES CASTING
AND CAMEO APPEARANCES FOR
THE TEMPEST
PART OF NEW COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVE
PUBLIC WORKS**

**WRITTEN BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
MUSIC & LYRICS BY TODD ALMOND
CONCEIVED AND DIRECTED BY LEAR DEBESSONET**

**More Than 200 New Yorkers From All Five Boroughs
To Perform In Free, Original Musical Adaptation**

***The Tempest* Runs September 6-8
At The Delacorte Theater**

August 7, 2013 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced today that Todd Almond (*Ariel*), Laura Benanti (*Goddess*), Carson Elrod (*Caliban*), Jeff Hiller (*Trinculo*), Norm Lewis (*Prospero*), and Jacob Ming-Trent (*Stephano*) have been cast in the free, original musical adaptation of **THE TEMPEST**, part of The Public's groundbreaking new initiative for community-based theater, **PUBLIC WORKS**. Directed by Public Works Director **Lear deBessonnet**, with music and lyrics by Almond, and choreography by Chase Brock, **THE TEMPEST** will run September 6 through September 8 at 8:00 p.m. at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park.

PUBLIC WORKS is designed to cultivate new connections and new models of engagement with artists, audiences and the community each year. In its inaugural year, it is creating an extraordinary example of participatory theater with this free, original musical adaptation of **THE TEMPEST**, inspired by a 1916 community theatrical event of *Caliban by the Yellow Sands* at the stadium at City College in New York.

"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."

Tickets to **THE TEMPEST** are free, continuing The Public Theater's long-standing tradition of free programming and community engagement. They will be distributed, two per person, at 12:00 p.m. on the day of the show at the Delacorte Theater. Since the opening of the Delacorte in 1962, more than five million people have enjoyed more than 150 free productions of Shakespeare and other classical works and musicals. Free tickets will be available via the Virtual Ticketing drawing at www.shakespeareinthepark.org on the day of the performance. Summer Supporter tickets are also available for a tax-deductible donation of \$75 each. For information and to donate, call 212-967-7555.

Seven cameo performers from New York City will also be featured in this **PUBLIC WORKS** production of **THE TEMPEST**, in addition to the previously announced five community partners: **Children's Aid Society** (Manhattan); **DreamYard** (Bronx); **Fortune Society** (Queens); **Brownsville Recreation Center** (Brooklyn); and **Domestic Workers United** (all boroughs, including Staten Island). For **THE TEMPEST**, participants from these community groups are performing in the ensemble as well as playing featured roles.

The cameo groups include **Ballet Tech**, the NYC Public School for Dance, with choreography by Eliot Feld; the **Calpulli Mexican Dance Company**, which creates folkloric and contemporary works while exploring Mexican traditions; the **Kaoru Watanabe Taiko Ensemble**, a taiko drumming group; the **Middle Church Jerriese Johnson Gospel Choir**, a choir based in New York's East Village; the **New York City Taxi Workers Alliance**; **Raya Brass Band**, which performs Balkan "gypsy" music; and **Stephen Duncan**, a New York City performance artist who specializes in super-sized soap bubbles.

THE TEMPEST will feature scenic design by **Matt Saunders**; costume design by **Paul Carey**; lighting design by **Tyler Micoleau**; and sound design by **Acme Sound Partners**.

This program is made possible with the generous support of the Ford Foundation.

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 is producing a 21st century version of this civic event with **THE TEMPEST**, an important part of the inaugural year of Public Works. Director Lear deBessonet has created large-scale theatrical events across the country to great acclaim, most recently *Don Quixote* in Philadelphia and *The Odyssey* in San Diego.

ABOUT PUBLIC WORKS:

PUBLIC WORKS exemplifies The Public's 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** is cultivating new connections and new models of engagement with artists, audiences and the community each year. The new initiative is bringing 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.

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 TEMPEST COMPANY:

TODD ALMOND (*Music & Lyrics/Ariel*) 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* (LCT3, dir: Lear deBessonnet); and *The Odyssey* (The Old Globe, dir: Lear deBessonnet). Almond music-directed and arranged Sherie Rene Scott's hit show *Piece of Meat* (54 Below and Hippodrome in London, dir: Lear deBessonnet). 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*.

LEAR deBESSONNET (*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 (Obie Award, Drama Desk nom., Lilly Award), 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.

CHASE BROCK (*Choreography*) most recently did the choreography for the Public Lab production of *Venice* at The Public. His Broadway credits include *Picnic*, and *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*. His Off-Broadway credits include *The Cradle Will Rock*, *The Blue Flower*, and *Lost in the Stars*. His television credits include "Late Show with David Letterman" and "Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade." For the opera he has choreographed *Roméo et Juliette* for Salzburger Festspiele. Additionally, he has choreographed 25 dances for the Brooklyn-based dance company, The Chase Brock Experience.

LAURA BENANTI (*Goddess*) has appeared at The Public in *Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them*. Her Broadway credits include *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*; *In the Next Room or the vibrator play*; *Gypsy*, for which she won a Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Award; *Nine*; *Into the Woods*; *Swing!*; *The Sound of Music*; and *The Wedding Singer*. Her additional Off-Broadway credits include *Wonderful Town* and *Time and Again*. Her film and television credits include *Meskada*, *Falling for Grace*, *Take the Lead*, "Royal Pains," "Go On," "The Playboy Club," and "The Big C," "Starved," and "Life on Mars."

CARSON ELROD (*Caliban*) has appeared in The Public Theater Shakespeare in the Park productions of *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*, and the Mobile Shakespeare Unit production of *Measure for Measure*. His Broadway credits include *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *Reckless*, and *Noises Off*. His additional Off-Broadway productions include *Cavedweller*; *House/Garden*; and *Comic Potential*. His film and television credits include *Wedding Crashers*; *Kissing Jessica Stein*; "30 Rock"; "Law & Order: Criminal Intent"; and "Medium."

JEFF HILLER (*Trinculo*) is currently appearing in The Public Theater's free Shakespeare in the Park production of *Love's Labour's Lost*, as well as *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* at The Public and on Broadway. His additional Off-Broadway credits include *Silence! The Musical*. His film and television credits include *Ghost Town*, *Little Tin Man*, *Gayby*, *Morning Glory*, "30 Rock," "Community," "Go On," "Partners," "Psych," and "Ugly Betty."

NORM LEWIS (*Prospero*) has appeared in The Public's 2013 Gala performance of *The Pirates of Penzance*, as well as The Public's Shakespeare in the Park production of *Two Gentleman of Verona* in

2005. He was last seen as Senator Edison Davis on the hit ABC drama, "Scandal." He recently received Tony, Drama Desk, Drama League and Outer Critics Circle Award nominations for his performance as Porgy in the Broadway production of *The Gershwins' Porgy & Bess*. His other Broadway credits include *Sondheim on Sondheim*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Les Misérables*, *Chicago*, *Amour*, *The Wild Party*, *Side Show*, *Miss Saigon*, *Tommy*. He has been seen in West End/London productions of *Les Misérables*, *Les Misérables 25th Anniversary Concert* (London's O2 Arena, PBS). He has performed Off-Broadway in *Ragtime*, with the New York Philharmonic (Avery Fisher Hall), *Dessa Rose* (Drama Desk nomination, AUDELCO Award), *Captains Courageous*, *A New Brain*, and regionally in Porgy in *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess* (A.R.T.), *Ragtime*, *Dreamgirls* (with Jennifer Holiday), *First You Dream*, *Sweeney Todd*, *The Fantasticks*. His film credits include *Sex and the City 2*, *Confidences*, *Preaching to the Choir*, and the upcoming *Winter's Tale* opposite Russell Crowe. His television credits include "Mystery Women," "All My Children," "As the World Turns," "Cosby," "Strong Medicine." CD: *Norm Lewis: This Is the Life!*

JACOB MING-TRENT (*Stephano*) has been seen on Broadway in *Hands on a Hardbody* and *Shrek the Musical*. His film and television credits include the upcoming *Forbidden Love*; "30 Rock"; "Bored to Death"; "Unforgettable"; and "Law & Order: Criminal Intent."

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

FORTUNE SOCIETY (Queens) is a nonprofit social service and advocacy organization, founded in 1967, whose mission is to support successful reentry from prison and promote alternatives to incarceration thus strengthening the fabric of their communities. Drawing upon the life experience of Fortune's formerly incarcerated staff and clients, they offer a holistic, "one-stop" model which includes: alternatives to incarceration, counseling, career development, education, housing services, HIV/AIDS-case management, substance abuse treatment, family services, and lifetime aftercare, among other 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 deBessonnet 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 continued up until **THE TEMPEST** production work began.

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. Since 1910, the Department of Parks & Recreation has provided the most affordable and extensive network of recreational services throughout New York City. Our recreation centers offer facilities such as indoor pools, weight rooms, basketball courts, and dance studios, art studios, game rooms, and libraries. As part of Public Works, senior citizens participate in a weekly dance class led by an artist from The Public. The seniors have learned a dance which they will perform in *The Tempest* in September at the Delacorte Theater and performed 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 to succeed and thrive by providing comprehensive support and critical services to children and their families in targeted high-needs New York City neighborhoods. CAS serves New York's neediest children and their families at more than 45 locations in the five boroughs and Westchester County. The Children's Aid Society Chorus program engages youth from across New York City. The CAS Chorus has performed at Radio City Music Hall, Joe's Pub, and Madison Square Garden. As part of Public Works, the Children's Aid Society Chorus (a group of 16 teenage girls led by CAS Staff Member Kelly Campbell) 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 participated in a workshop with Todd Almond, the composer of **THE TEMPEST**, who wrote a special song for them for the production.

DREAMYARD (Bronx) provides transformative arts education for Bronx youth through school-based and out-of-school programs. By committing to sustained learning opportunities along an educational pathway, DreamYard supports young people as they work toward higher learning, meaningful careers and social action. We believe that young people in the Bronx need a continuous set of supports to help them towards positive outcomes as they navigate their educational pathway. Dreamyard's Out of School Programs were recognized by President Obama with a 2012 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, the nation's highest honor for after school arts programs. 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 participated 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. Domestic Workers United was founded in 2000 and is open to any domestic worker who is committed to our mission and goals to organize for power, respect, fair labor standards, and to build a movement for social change. 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.

CAMEO APPEARANCES:

BALLET TECH began in 1974 when world-renowned choreographer Eliot Feld founded a professional dance company, then known as the Eliot Feld Ballet. In 1978, Mr. Feld created a tuition-free ballet school for New York City public school children. To date, the Ballet Tech School has auditioned 744,201 children and enrolled 18,922 students. Ballet Tech is dedicated to seeking out talented New York City public school students and provides a continuum of training from introductory through professional level training. Throughout the children's instruction, dance classes, shoes and leotards are provided free of charge. During the first year of training, transportation is provided while students attend ballet classes on a school-time release program. Students who show the talent and passion required to study classical ballet are invited to attend The New York City Public School for Dance (NYCPSD) - a cooperative, tuition-free venture between the NYC Department of Education and Ballet Tech. The school offers a rigorous academic curriculum paired with intensive dance training for students in grades 4 through 8.

CALPULLI MEXICAN DANCE COMPANY, in 2013, celebrates 10 years of artistic creation, arts-in-education, and community outreach. This year Calpulli also made its international debut by traveling to and performing in the Middle East in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Prior to that, the company was featured at Carnegie Hall, Dollywood Festival of Nations, CalTech University, and Queens Theatre in the Park. The company creates folkloric and contemporary works with live music that explore Mexican traditions and their interpretation in the USA. It also leads low cost community dance and music programs across New York City.

KAORU WATANABE TAIKO ENSEMBLE. The ensemble's founder, Kaoru Watanabe, is a New York based practitioner of various Japanese transverse bamboo flutes, the taiko drum, as well as the Western flute. His music can be best described as an ever-shifting blend of the folk and classical traditions of Japan with contemporary improvisational and experimental music. Watanabe has performed with such artists as Jason Moran, Bando Tamasaburo, Kiyohiko Semba and was a performing member and artistic director of the iconic Japanese taiko ensemble Kodo.

MIDDLE CHURCH JERRIESE JOHNSON GOSPEL CHOIR (MCJJGC), directed by John Del Cueto and accompanied by Director of Community Music Dionne McClain-Freeney, has a powerful and dynamic

ministry, both inside the church walls and out. Featured on the "Today Show" and "Good Morning America," the choir appeared on Britain's "Sunday Night Project," has sung with Debbie Harry, and performed at the Under the Radar Festival at The Public Theater. Their repertoire, rooted in gospel music, also includes a wide range of musical genres. The choir was founded in 1986 by the late Jerriese Johnson, an East Village actor and singer. The choir is a group of diverse, dynamic, and committed singers that meet every Thursday evening for rehearsal. This multiethnic and multicultural choir is a microcosm of the radical welcome, inclusion, and hospitality of Middle Collegiate Church. Their music transforms audiences with joyful execution, contagious spirit, and a commitment to excellence. In addition to singing twice monthly during worship, the MCJJGC works for social justice and equality, singing in support of causes such as LGBT PRIDE, the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast and Haiti, Japan Relief, and economic justice.

NEW YORK CTY TAXI WORKERS ALLIANCE, in 1998, is the 17,000-member strong union of NYC yellow taxicab drivers. Through organizing, direct action, legal and health services, media presence, political advocacy and the cultivation of allies and supporters, NYTWA - a multi-ethnic, multi-generational union - builds power for one of the most vulnerable and visible immigrant workforces in the city of New York. In 2012, NYTWA won a livable income raise, first-time regulations of taxi companies, and a Health and Disability Fund for drivers, the first for taxi drivers nationwide and one of the first for independent contractors. In 2011, NYTWA was chartered to build the National Taxi Workers Alliance, the 57th union of the AFL-CIO. The NTWA is the first charter for non-traditional workers since the farm workers in the 1960's, and the first one ever of independent contractors. NYTWA has increased drivers' incomes by 35-45%, secured over \$15 million in emergency aid to drivers, and provided pro bono or discounted legal, financial management, and health services to over 10,000 drivers and families

RAYA BRASS BAND draws in both average listeners and Eastern European folk music aficionados alike with its energetic and engaging portable show. Raya Brass Band bursts with a frenetic joie de vivre that powers the high-energy party. Digging into black-market compilations, Eastern European carnival traditions and their own eclectic musical pasts (New Orleans brass, punk, out jazz), Raya Brass Band has the chops to match their irrational exuberance. The band has recently appeared at Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Joe's Pub Summer Salon Series with Sxip Shirey at the Cooper Square Hotel, the Brooklyn Flea, Queens Library, Club Helsinki in Hudson, NY, the Children's Museum of Art in Manhattan and Sarah Small's Tableaux Vivant at One Hanson Place in Brooklyn.

STEPHEN DUNCAN is the founder and proprietor of a small business in which he makes large, super-sized soap bubbles. He is performance artist who believes that large bubbles are a form of artistic medium and self-expression, much like a painter painting on a canvas. He also uses bubbles as a form of self-advertising to teach others about his craft, currently plying his trade in public parks around New York City. He plans to start a company that provides a feature of interactive entertainment that will provide joy and amusement for both children and adults of all walks of life.

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

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FREE TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for the **PUBLIC WORKS** production of *THE TEMPEST*, running September 6-8 at 8:00 p.m., are **FREE** and will be distributed, two per person, at 12:00 p.m. on the day of the show at the Delacorte Theater.

Free tickets will also be available via the Virtual Ticketing drawing at www.shakespeareinthepark.org on the day of the show.

Summer Supporter tickets are also available for a tax-deductible donation of \$75 each. For information and to donate, call **212-967-7555**.

The Public's Delacorte Theater is accessible by entering at 81st Street and Central Park West, or 79th Street and Fifth Avenue. For more information, visit www.publictheater.org.

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