

THE PUBLIC THEATER ANNOUNCES EXPANSION OF PUBLIC WORKS INITIATIVE **ACTivate**

Next Tier of Groundbreaking Program Partners Community Ensemble to Create New Original Work **TROY**

June 2, 2016 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) has announced the expansion of Public Works with **ACTivate**, a new tier of the groundbreaking initiative designed to bind our community together by creating acts of participatory theater to examine the great issues and dilemmas of our time. Expanding the participant's role in the artistic process, **ACTivate** bridges the gap between the year-round classes and annual Delacorte pageant in September, engaging the ensemble in every aspect of the creative process and culminating in an original piece. This year, the ensemble will present **TROY** in The Public's LuEsther Hall for four invited presentations only, **June 10-12**.

Public Works is founded on a 360° transformational experience of theater: making theater, seeing theater, and discussing theater. In February 2015, Public Works launched **ACTivate** (Artist, Citizen, Theatermaker) to put the community into the "driver's seat" of creating a new work. All alumni of the Public Works Delacorte productions (18 years or older) were eligible to audition to be part of an ensemble-based process over 18 months. During this process, participants worked with **Associate Director of Public Works Laurie Woolery** in building ensemble skills through physical exploration, improvisation, vocal technique, scene study and creative writing.

In addition, they worked together to devise a new piece, **TROY**, with playwright Andrea Thome. Inspired by Euripides' The Trojan Women, the ensemble ventured into their neighborhoods and interviewed everyday New Yorkers about family, community and memory. Those interviews, as well as the original writings of the ensemble, are the inspiration for the piece, which examines the assault of a young black teen as the inciting crisis and explores the community dealing with what it is like to worry for the safety of their children.

"ACTivate represents a crucial new dimension of Public Works: our community members devising an original piece," said **Public Works Director Lear deBessonet**. "Completing the arc of opportunities that expand from our classes at community venues to our summer pageants at the Delacorte, ACTivate is a beautiful expression of the rigor and insight our Public Works ensemble members bring to the creation of vital new American theater."

The inaugural **ACTivate** ensemble features **H. Sebastian Arteta, Lori Brown-Niang, Llewellyn Connolly, Bianca Edwards, Nanya-Akuki Goodrich, Brittany Franklin, Lourdes Guzman-Mercado, Aden Munassar, Arianne Recto, Éva Hanorah Stanton, Matthew Vazquez, and Fabian Zarta**. This ensemble represents the full spectrum of diversity that is emblematic of the Public Works community.

In addition to **ACTivate** downtown at Astor Place, Public Works will also return to celebrate its fourth year at the Delacorte this fall with an enchanting new musical adaptation of Shakespeare's **TWELFTH NIGHT** with music and lyrics by the critically acclaimed songwriter Shaina Taub, running **September 2-5**. Professional artists and community members from partner organizations in all five boroughs perform together on stage in this love story that follows the young heroine Viola, who disguises herself as a man when she washes up on the shores of Ilyria. When Viola's new boss, Duke Orsino, sends her to win over his unrequited love, the Countess Olivia, Viola's disguise proves too effective, and the Countess falls for the young girl dressed as a boy instead. Artistic Director of Baltimore's Center Stage, Kwame Kwei-Armah, directs this musical fever dream about love in all its many disguises, and transformative power of walking a mile in another's shoes.

For more information about Public Works' **ACTivate** and **TROY**, please visit www.publictheater.org

ANDREA THOME (*Playwright*) is a Chilean/Costa Rican-American playwright whose plays include *Pinkolandia* (INTAR, Salvage Vanguard Theater, Two River Theater, Chicago's 16th Street Theater); *Undone* (Kilroys list; Queens College Theater, Victory Gardens' Ignition Festival); *Worm Girl* (Cherry Red Productions, DC) and the music-theater piece *The Necklace of the Dove* (Mabou Mines Resident Artist, 2013 and 2015). She is currently 'translating' Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* into modern English for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Thome's Spanish-English translations include Guillermo Calderón's *Neva* (The Public Theater, Center Theatre Group), Rodrigo García's *You Should Have Stayed Home*, *Morons* (Center Theatre Group), and David Gaitán's *Paradise By Design* (CalArts). She directs The Lark's Mexico-US Playwright Exchange Program, co-directs the satire collective FULANA, and has worked in schools all over NYC. She is a resident playwright at New Dramatists.

LAURIE WOOLERY (*Associate Director of Public Works*) is a Latina director/playwright/educator/producer who has worked at the theaters across the country including Oregon Shakespeare Festival, The Public Theater, Goodman Theatre, Cornerstone Theater Company, and South Coast Repertory. Woolery has created new works with diverse communities from incarcerated women to autistic youth to residents of a Kansas town devastated by a tornado. She is the Associate Director of Public Works at The Public Theater. Laurie is the former Associate Artistic Director of Cornerstone Theater Company and Conservatory Director at South Coast Repertory. Woolery teaches at universities across the country and serves on the Board of the Latino Producers Action Network. Latino/a Commons and founding member of The Sol Project.

ABOUT PUBLIC WORKS:

Public Works is a major 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 invites 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 deliberately blurs the line between professional artists and community members creating 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 2016 community partner organizations of Public Works are Brownsville Recreation Center (Brooklyn), Casita Maria Center for Arts and Education (Bronx), Center for Family Life in Sunset Park (Brooklyn), DreamYard Project (Bronx), The Fortune Society (Queens), Military Resilience Project (all boroughs), and alumni partners Children's Aid Society (Manhattan) and Domestic Workers United (all boroughs). Lead support for Public Works is provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Ford Foundation, New York City Theater Subdistrict Council, The Tow Foundation, and The Stavros Niarchos

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ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER:

The Public Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director Oskar Eustis and Executive Director Patrick Willingham, is the only theater in New York that produces Shakespeare, the classics, musicals, contemporary and experimental pieces in equal measure. Celebrating his 10th anniversary season at The Public, Eustis has created new community-based initiatives designed to engage audiences like Public Lab, Public Studio, Public Forum, Public Works, and a remount of the Mobile Unit. 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 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; Public Works, an expanding initiative that is designed to cultivate new connections and new models of engagement with artists, audiences and the community each year; and audience and artist development initiatives that range from Emerging Writers Group and to the Public Forum series. The Public 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. The Public is currently represented on Broadway by the Tony Award-winning *Fun Home* and Lin-Manuel Miranda's acclaimed American musical *Hamilton*, and Danai Gurira's *Eclipsed* featuring Lupita Nyong'o. The Public has received 47 Tony Awards, 168 Obie Awards, 52 Drama Desk Awards, 54 Lortel Awards, 32 Outer Critics Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics Awards, and five Pulitzer Prizes. www.publictheater.org.

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