

THE PUBLIC THEATER
AND
THE ONASSIS FOUNDATION USA
PRESENT
THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS
AT THE DELACORTE THEATER
SEPTEMBER 4-9

Book, Original Lyrics, and Direction by Lee Breuer
Original Music, Adapted Lyrics, and
Music Direction by Bob Telson

Six Free Performances to Celebrate the
35th Anniversary of Original Production and
Honor Playwright and Director Lee Breuer
for Lifetime of Excellence

July 24, 2018 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) and the Onassis Foundation USA announced today six free performances of ***THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS***, the groundbreaking re-telling of Sophocles' classic, for a limited engagement, September 4-9 at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park. With book, original lyrics, and direction by **Lee Breuer** and original music, adapted lyrics, and music direction by **Bob Telson**, the iconic musical returns to New York City for the first time since 2004 to celebrate the 35th Anniversary of the original production at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and to honor visionary director Lee Breuer for his lifetime of excellence and historic collaboration with The Public Theater.

"*The Gospel at Colonus* is the masterpiece of the populist side of Lee's work, a brilliant merging of Greek tragedy and biblical traditions and an astonishing meditation on death and life," said **Artistic Director Oskar Eustis**. "I first walked into The Public Theater as a student (and groupie!) of Lee Breuer's. Joe Papp had given his theater company, Mabou Mines, a home here and over the next few years Lee and his colleague JoAnne Akalaitis became central figures in The Public Theater family. I am so proud to be honoring Lee and honoring us with a week of *Colonus* in the Park."

"What better proof can there be of the endurance, universality, and power of Greek theater than *Gospel at Colonus*—an ancient Greek tragedy turned into religious parable within the framework of the Pentecostal church?" said **President of the Onassis Foundation Anthony S. Papadimitriou**. "Sophocles wrote the original play, *Oedipus at Colonus*, nearly 2,500 years ago, to be performed at a religious festival, that of Dionysus. There are many parallels we can draw between the two—the ecstatic element, the use of the chorus, the power of song. However, most important for the Onassis Foundation, an institution that, beyond Greek culture, promotes social cohesion and embraces diversity, was the *Gospel's* unifying vision. It is a production that unites cultures and époques, and it invites people to participate in a communal spiritual experience, much as they would in a church. That is also the purpose of theater since antiquity, and at the Onassis Foundation, we are thrilled to be able to bring this magnificent interpretation of the work of Sophocles to the closest thing New York has to an ancient Greek amphitheater: the Delacorte in Central Park."

THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS is one of the most powerful, soul-stirring shows in theater history. Set in the context of a black Pentecostal service, it is an exuberant re-telling of Sophocles' classic *Oedipus at Colonus*. With the ground-shaking thunder of a gospel revival meeting, this Obie-winning adaptation celebrates the 2400-year-old myth of Oedipus' redemption with a rousing gospel and blues score.

Conceived, adapted, and directed by MacArthur Genius Grant winner **Lee Breuer**, with music composed, arranged, and directed by Academy Award nominee **Bob Telson**, **THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS** is a one-of-a-kind show featuring more than 40 powerhouse voices including gospel legends **The Blind Boys of Alabama** and **The Original Soul Stirrers**. **THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS** is produced by Sharon Levy/Dovetail Productions, Inc. with Associate Producer Mabou Mines and co-directed by Dodd Loomis.

Visionary director and playwright **Lee Breuer**, whose work in the American Theater spans more than five decades, has a history of collaboration with The Public Theater. Breuer is the founding co-artistic director of the Mabou Mines Theater Company, an experimental theater company founded in 1970 with JoAnne Akalaitis, Philip Glass, Ruth Maleczek, Fred Neumann, and David Warrilow. Breuer and Mabou Mines presented several productions at The Public Theater during Joe Papp's tenure as Artistic Director, including Breuer's *A Prelude to Venice*, *Sister Suzie Cinema*, *Shaggy Dog Animation*, *B. Beaver Animation*, and his adaptation of Samuel Beckett's *The Lost Ones*. He also directed the 1981 Shakespeare in the Park production of *The Tempest* featuring Raúl Juliá at the Delacorte. Breuer has received the Chevalier Ordre Des Arts et Lettres from France, been nominated for a Tony Award, been named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, received a MacArthur Genius Grant, and received an American Express/Kennedy Center Award for Best New American Play and an Edinburgh Herald Award for Sustained Achievement. Breuer has directed 13 Obie award-winning performances, and has received Obie Awards for Best Play, Best Directing, Best Musical, and Sustained Achievement.

The complete cast of **THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS** will feature **Rev. Dr. Earl F. Miller** (*The Messenger*); **The Blind Boys of Alabama** (*Oedipus*); **The Legendary Soul Stirrers: Willie Rogers, Ben Odom, Gene Stewart** (*Choragos*); **Wren T. Brown** (*Theseus*); **Greta Oglesby** (*Antigone*); **Shari Addison** (*Ismene*); **J.D. Steele** (*Choir Director*); **Tina Fabrique** (*Soloist*); **Jeff Young** (*Soloist*); **Sam Butler Jr.** (*Balladeer*); **Jay Caldwell** (*Creon*); **Kevin Davis** (*Polyneices*); **Carolyn Johnson-White** (*Choir Soloist*); and **Josie Johnson** (*Chorus*).

THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS premiered in 1983 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival to great acclaim, earning the Obie Award for Outstanding Musical and was a 1985 finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. The groundbreaking musical moved to Broadway, opening on March 24, 1988 at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre, and earning a 1988 Tony Award nomination for Best Book of a Musical and Grammy Award nomination for Best Recorded Theatrical Score. Since its original Broadway run, **THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS** has toured with a majority of the original cast, nationally and internationally with engagements in New York, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Minneapolis, Cleveland, Chicago, San Francisco, London, Edinburgh, Paris, Zurich, Spoleto, Barcelona, Sao Paolo, Moscow, Vienna, and Athens, among others. **THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS** was most recently seen in New York in 2004 at the famed Apollo Theatre in Harlem.

Tickets for **THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS** will be distributed, two per person, at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park beginning at 12:00 p.m. on the day of the show. Tickets will be distributed by mobile lottery on the TodayTix app each date that there is a public performance at the Delacorte Theater. On each public performance date, a limited number of vouchers for that night's performance will also be distributed via an in-person lottery at The Public Theater, 425 Lafayette Street at Astor Place. With a tax deductible donation of \$75 or \$150, you'll receive a reserved seat to the event. For information and to donate, call 212.967.7555. To make it easier for all New Yorkers to enjoy **THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS**, a limited number of vouchers will be distributed on Wednesday, September 5 at the Brooklyn Central Library and Friday, September 7 at the Harlem School of the Arts. More dates to be confirmed, please visit publictheater.org for more information.

THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS is co-presented by the Onassis Foundation USA. Additional funding made possible by the **JKW Foundation**, the **Howard Gilman Foundation**, and the **American Express Foundation**.

LEE BREUER (*Conceiver, Adapter, Book, Original Lyrics, and Direction*), a Chevalier and MacArthur Fellow, is a writer, lyricist, and director whose work expands the boundaries of storytelling in the theater. He is a founding

artistic director of the groundbreaking Mabou Mines Theater Company and has taught and directed worldwide including staging the first American play to be produced by the Comédie-Française, Tennessee Williams' *Un tramway nommé Désir*. *The Gospel at Colonus*, his unprecedented merger of Greek theater and gospel service is now a classic of the contemporary stage; as is his post-Brechtian production *Mabou Mines DollHouse*. Breuer recently directed the feature documentary film *The Book of Clarence*, about the legendary Gospel singer Clarence Fountain of the Blind Boys of Alabama and will have two books published this fall: *Getting Off*, Theater Communications Group, and *La Divina Caricatura, the Trilogy*, Seagull Press.

BOB TELSON (*Original Music, Adapted Lyrics, and Music Direction*) received his B.A. in music from Harvard. During the '70's he played with the Phillip Glass Ensemble, Tito Puente, and The Blind Boys of Alabama, among others. Telson's collaboration with Lee Breuer began in 1979 and includes *The Gospel at Colonus* and *The Warrior Ant*. His *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* received a Tony nomination for Best Musical and his movie score for "Bagdad Café" received an Oscar Nomination for the song "Calling You." His songs have been recorded by Celine Dion, Joe Cocker, k.d. lang, George Benson, George Michael, Natalie Cole, Barbara Streisand, and Brazilian legends Gal Costa and Caetano Veloso.

SHARON LEVY (*Producer*) is President of Dovetail Productions, developing, producing, and touring new work for the stage and other media; including Noche Flamenca's *Antigona*, Lee Breuer's *La Divina Caricatura*, *Shalom Shanghai* for the Shanghai Arts Festival, Baba Brinkman's *The Rap Guide to Evolution*, *Mabou Mines DollHouse* for Arte French television, Lee Breuer and Bob Telson's *The Gospel at Colonus*, *Bagdad Café – The Musical* based on the Percy Adlon film, *The Works*, a 12-hour music marathon for Meet The Composer, the jazz opera *Lulu Noire*, the *Tribute to King Oliver* for the '96 Olympics, the Jon Faddis Sextet's tribute to Dizzy Gillespie, and Atlanta casting director for Robert Altman's HBO series *Tanner '88*.

ABOUT THE ONASSIS FOUNDATION USA:

An affiliate of the parent Foundation in Greece, the Onassis Foundation USA is dedicated to Greek culture from antiquity to the present. By cooperating with educational and cultural institutions in Greece and throughout the Americas, the Onassis Foundation USA promotes cultural relations. The mission is realized through two major initiatives, one cultural for the general public through its Onassis Cultural Center New York, and the other educational for scholars and students in partnership with educational institutions through the Onassis Humanities Impact Program.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER:

THE PUBLIC is theater of, by, and for all people. Artist-driven, radically inclusive, and fundamentally democratic, The Public continues the work of its visionary founder Joe Papp as a civic institution engaging, both on-stage and off, with some of the most important ideas and social issues of today. Conceived over 60 years ago as one of the nation's first nonprofit theaters, The Public has long operated on the principles that theater is an essential cultural force and that art and culture belong to everyone. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Oskar Eustis and Executive Director Patrick Willingham, The Public's wide breadth of programming includes an annual season of new work at its landmark home at Astor Place, Free Shakespeare in the Park at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, The Mobile Unit touring throughout New York City's five boroughs, Public Forum, Under the Radar, Public Studio, Public Works, Public Shakespeare Initiative, and Joe's Pub. Since premiering *HAIR* in 1967, The Public continues to create the canon of American Theater and is currently represented on Broadway by the Tony Award-winning musical *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 59 Tony Awards, 170 Obie Awards, 53 Drama Desk Awards, 54 Lortel Awards, 32 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Desk Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. publictheater.org

#