

**THE PUBLIC THEATER'S
POPULAR MOBILE UNIT
TO TOUR THIS SPRING WITH
ROMEO & JULIET
DIRECTED BY LEAR deBESSONET**

**Free Three-Week Tour Visits
Correctional Facilities, Homeless Shelters,
Social Service Organizations, Community Centers
March 18-April 9**

**Five Borough Tour Followed by Sit-Down Run at The Public
April 11-May 1**

**Romeo & Juliet Part of The Public's Season Celebrating
400th Anniversary of Shakespeare's Death**

February 17, 2016 – Continuing its commitment to bringing free Shakespeare to the community and strengthening audience engagement with the arts, The Public Theater will mount its **MOBILE UNIT** again this March with a free three-week tour to the five boroughs of Shakespeare's ***ROMEO & JULIET***, directed by **Lear deBessonet**. As part of Artistic Director Oskar Eustis' 10th Anniversary season, the free Mobile Unit tour (March 18 – April 9) will bring Shakespeare to audiences who have limited or no access to the arts by visiting correctional facilities, homeless shelters, social service organizations, and other community venues. Following the free tour, ***ROMEO & JULIET*** will have a sit-down run at The Public Theater from Monday, April 11 through Sunday, May 1, with an official press opening on Friday, April 15.

ROMEO & JULIET will have a performance at The Public on April 23 at 7:00 p.m. in honor of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death and on March 23 at 7:00 p.m., the Mobile Unit will perform for the first time ever at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, which will also host a special exhibit featuring the writings of Public Theater Founder Joe Papp, honoring the Mobile Unit's long history in serving the people of New York City. ***ROMEO & JULIET*** was the first production ever toured by Joe Papp's original Mobile Shakespeare program in 1957.

"The Mobile Unit is the purest expression of The Public Theater's mission, to make sure the culture belongs to everyone," said **Artistic Director Oskar Eustis**. "The genius of Lear deBessonet which has been so beautifully visible at the Delacorte for the last three years, will now be seen throughout the city in prisons, community centers, and shelters. We are blessed in her."

The complete cast of ***ROMEO & JULIET*** features **Sheldon Best** (*Romeo*); **Jorge Eliézer Chacón** (*Tybalt*); **Mahira Kakkar** (*Lady Capulet*); **Maria-Christina Oliveras** (*Nurse, Montague*); **Danny Rivera** (*Benvolio*); **David Ryan Smith** (*Friar Laurence, Lord Capulet*); **Marques Toliver** (*The Chorus*); **Max Woertendyke** (*Mercutio, Prince*); and **Ayana Workman** (*Juliet*).

Tickets priced at \$20 for the sit-down run of **ROMEO & JULIET** at The Public are available now. Tickets can be accessed by calling **(212) 967-7555**, www.publictheater.org, or in person at the Taub Box Office at The Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street. All tour performances are free, but performances at Pelham Fritz Recreation Center, Highbridge Recreation Center, Brownsville Recreation Center, Faber Park Field House, Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, and St. Paul's Chapel are also open to the general public via RSVP at www.publictheater.org. The performance at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts is also open to the general public via RSVP at www.nypl.org. To further the mission and reach of the **MOBILE UNIT**, tickets for each performance of the limited run at The Public Theater will be given to community organizations that cannot host a visit from the tour.

Now in its sixth year with touring productions in the fall and spring, the **MOBILE UNIT** with a cast of nine will bring to the five boroughs some of the most romantic language ever written for the stage with **ROMEO & JULIET**. Young Romeo and Juliet become fortune's fools when the ancient grudge between their families forces them to sacrifice all for the chance to be together. Obie Award winner Lear deBessonet directs this classic tale of star-cross'd lovers caught between the world outside the bedroom window and passion as boundless as the sea.

"There is much to love about this production of *Romeo & Juliet*, but I'm particularly excited to welcome Public Works Director, Lear deBessonet, and Joe's Pub artist, Marques Toliver, to the Mobile Unit," said **Director of Special Artistic Projects Stephanie Ybarra**. "A mash-up of the Mobile Unit, Public Works, and Joe's Pub is the kind of thing that can only happen at The Public Theater. It is a collaboration befitting of this rare opportunity to share Shakespeare's most popular story with audiences who have never seen or read the play before."

ROMEO & JULIET features scenic design by Wilson Chin, costume design by Andrea Hood, music composition by Marques Toliver, choreography by Benoit-Swan Pouffer, and fight direction by Lisa Kopitsky.

Recent **MOBILE UNIT** productions include *The Comedy of Errors*, *Measure for Measure*; *Richard III*; *Much Ado About Nothing*; *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre*; and *Macbeth*. This program continues the expansion of The Public's Shakespeare Initiative, which includes the recent Public Works productions of *The Odyssey*, *The Tempest*, and *The Winter's Tale* staged at the Delacorte Theater for free; Free Shakespeare in the Park; and The Public's other affordable productions at its downtown home at Astor Place, all reinforcing the Company's commitment to the ongoing exploration of Shakespeare's canon. **THE MOBILE UNIT** will also present educational workshops at selected tour venues, expanding The Public's existing community outreach and education program.

THE MOBILE UNIT is made possible with the support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The Stavros Niarchos Foundation, The Tow Foundation, and Bloomberg Philanthropies. Additional generous support provided by Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi LLP. Special thanks to The Philip and Janice Levin Foundation's lead support for The Public's access and engagement programming.

Also as part of The Public's season celebrating the 400th Anniversary of Shakespeare's death, The Public will be offering an all-female version of **THE TAMING OF THE SHREW**, directed by **Phyllida Lloyd** and featuring Olivier Award nominee **Cush Jumbo** as Katherina and Tony Award winner **Janet McTeer** as Petruchio from May 24-June 26 at free Shakespeare in the Park, followed by **TROILUS AND CRESSIDA**, directed by Tony Award winner **Daniel Sullivan**, July 19-August 14. Public Works' musical adaptation of **TWELFTH NIGHT** will also play for free at the Delacorte in early September, and be conceived by Kwame Kwei-Armah and Shaina Taub, with music and lyrics by Taub and directed by Kwei-Armah. On Monday, June 6, **The Public's Annual Gala** at the Delacorte will be a star-studded one-night-only celebration of Shakespeare's 400-year legacy.

In conjunction with the start of the Delacorte summer season, The Public will be partnering with the **New-York Historical Society** and **92nd Street Y** to present **First Folio! The Book That Gave Us Shakespeare**, published in 1623, as part of the Folger Shakespeare Library's nation-wide tour celebrating the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. Containing the first published scripts of 36 of Shakespeare's most famous plays—including *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *As You Like It*—the First Folio will be on display at the New-York Historical Society for six weeks for free, beginning June 7. To celebrate this magnificent book and the playwright who changed the world, there will be a series of events and conversations planned about the work and world of William Shakespeare.

TOUR DATES WILL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING VENUES (March 18 – April 9):

Pelham Fritz Recreation Center, Manhattan, is a NYC Parks and Recreation center located in Harlem (March 18).

Highbridge Recreation Center, Manhattan, a NYC Parks and Recreation center located in Washington Heights (March 19).

Lenox Hill Women's Mental Health Shelter at the Park Avenue Armory, Manhattan, provides short-term, safe, and supportive environments to address immediate needs for mentally ill homeless women (March 21).

Brownsville Recreation Center, Brooklyn, a Public Works community partner, is a NYC Parks and Recreation center located in the Brownsville Playground with extensive resources for youth and seniors. The center offers a vibrant space to tap into pursuits artistic and athletic alike (March 22).

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Manhattan, houses one of the world's most extensive collections in its field, available free of charge (March 23).

Queensboro Correctional Facility, Queens, is a minimum security correctional facility in Long Island City (March 24).

Rikers Island Correction Facility, Rikers Island, is a maximum security correctional facility (March 25 and March 30).

New York City's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, Manhattan, is a one-of-a-kind organization that empowers community members to lead healthy, successful lives (March 26).

DreamYard Arts Project, Bronx, a Public Works community partner, uses project-based arts learning to ignite the transformative spirit (March 28).

Casita Maria, Bronx, a new Public Works community partner, empowers youth and their families through high quality social, cultural, and educational opportunities (March 29).

Metropolitan Detention Center, Brooklyn, is a U.S. federal administrative detention facility, which holds male and female prisoners of all security levels (March 31 and April 1).

Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, Bronx, is a NYC Parks and Recreation center located in the Bronx (April 2).

Metropolitan Correctional Center, Manhattan, is a U.S. federal administrative detention facility, which holds male and female prisoners of all security levels (April 4).

ICL Personalized Recovery-Oriented Services, Brooklyn, is a comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation program for adults with serious mental illness (April 5).

Taconic Correctional Facility, Westchester, is a medium security facility for women in New York (April 6).

Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, Westchester, is the largest maximum security facility for women in New York (April 7).

St. Paul's Chapel, Manhattan, part of Trinity Wall Street, an Episcopal parish that has been a part of New York City since 1697 (April 8).

Faber Park Field House, Staten Island, is a NYC Parks and Recreation center located in Staten Island (April 9).

LEAR deBESSONET (*Director*) is currently Resident Director at The Public Theater and Director of Public Works, for which she has directed large-scale musical adaptations of *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Odyssey* at the Delacorte, each featuring a cast of 200. Also for The Public, she directed *Good Person of Szechwan*, produced by Foundry Theatre originally at LaMaMa (Obie Award for Direction, Lortel Award for Best Revival, Drama Desk Nomination, Lilly Award). She has directed shows for City Center Encores! Off-Center; LCT3; the Old Globe; the Intiman; the Guthrie; Joe's Pub at The Public; Women's Project; Performance Space 122; Ten Thousand Things; 13p; and Clubbed Thumb. Her previous large-scale community projects include *The Odyssey* at the Old Globe (2011) and her site-specific *Don Quixote*, a collaboration with homeless shelter Broad Street Ministry and the punk-gypsy ensemble The Psalters (2009). Recipient of the Doris Duke Impact Award, TCG's Peter Zeisler Award, the Meadow's Prize, and LMCC's Presidential Award for Artistic Excellence, she has also acted as a visiting professor at NYU-Tisch School of the Arts.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER:

The Public Theater, under the leadership of 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*. The Public has received 47 Tony Awards, 167 Obie Awards, 52 Drama Desk Awards, 48 Lortel Awards, 31 Outer Critics Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics Awards, and four Pulitzer Prizes. www.publictheater.org

TICKET INFORMATION

All tour performances for **ROMEO & JULIET** are free, but performances at Pelham Fritz Recreation Center, Highbridge Recreation Center, Brownsville Recreation Center, Faber Park Field House, Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, and St. Paul's Chapel are also open to the general public via RSVP at www.publictheater.org. The performance at the New York Library Public Library for the Performing Arts is also open to the general public via RSVP at www.nypl.org. Please check The Public's website for the most up-to-date performance times.

Following the free Mobile Unit tour of the five boroughs, **ROMEO & JULIET** will run at The Public Theater from Monday, April 11 through Sunday, May 1 in the Shiva Theater, with an official press opening on Friday, April 15.

Tickets priced at \$20 are available now and can be accessed by calling **(212) 967-7555**, visiting www.publictheater.org; or in person at the Taub Box Office at 425 Lafayette Street.

The performance schedule will be Tuesday through Sundays at 7:00 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. (*There is an added performance on Monday, April 11 at 7:00 p.m. There is no performance on Saturday, April 16 at 2:00 p.m., Saturday, April 16 at 7:00 p.m., or Sunday, April 24 at 7:00 p.m.*)

The Library at The Public is open nightly for food and drink, beginning at 5:00 p.m., and Joe's Pub at The

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