

# THE PUBLIC THEATER BEGINS FREE PERFORMANCES FOR PUBLIC WORKS MUSICAL ADAPTATION OF AS YOU LIKE IT FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

Adapted by Shaina Taub & Laurie Woolery
Music & Lyrics by Shaina Taub
Choreography by Sonya Tayeh
Directed by Laurie Woolery

Fifth Season of Public Works to Feature 200 New Yorkers
From All Five Boroughs on the Delacorte Stage
With Ato Blankson-Wood, Darius de Haas,
Rebecca Naomi Jones, Joel Perez,
Shaina Taub and Cameo Groups

August 22, 2017 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) will begin performances for the free Public Works musical adaptation of William Shakespeare's **AS YOU LIKE IT**, adapted by Shaina Taub and Laurie Woolery, with music and lyrics by Shaina Taub on Friday, September 1. Directed by Laurie Woolery with choreography by Sonya Tayeh, **AS YOU LIKE IT** will once again feature over 200 community members, equity actors, and musicians. This unforgettable Public Works musical adaptation about chance encounters and self-discovery will run for five nights for free, September 1-5, at the Delacorte Theater. Free tickets will be distributed, two per person, at 12:00 p.m. on the day of the show at the Delacorte Theater and via the TodayTix virtual ticketing lottery.

Celebrating its fifth season, Public Works is The Public's local and national initiative that invites diverse communities from across New York to join in creating ambitious works of participatory theater. This year, Public Works presents Shakespeare's **AS YOU LIKE IT** in a ravishing new musical adaptation by Director of Public Works Laurie Woolery, and Shaina Taub, featuring music and lyrics by Taub, the acclaimed singer/songwriter behind last season's "free-spirited, thoroughly delightful" (*The New York Times*) adaptation of *Twelfth Night*, and choreography by Emmy nominee and Lortel Award winner Sonya Tayeh. Two hundred community members and professional actors perform together on the Delacorte stage in this immersive dream-like tale of faithful friends, feuding families, and lovers in disguise. Forced from their homes, Orlando, Duke Senior, his daughter Rosalind and niece Celia, escape to the Forest of Arden, a fantastical place of transformation, where all are welcomed and embraced. Lost amidst the trees, the refugees find community and acceptance under the stars. Fall under love's spell in this magical story of chance encounters and self-discovery.

AS YOU LIKE IT features equity actors Ato Blankson-Wood (Orlando), Darius de Haas (Duke Senior), Rebecca Naomi Jones (Rosalind), Joel Perez (Touchstone), and Shaina Taub (Jaques); along with cameo group performances by Bronx Wrestling Federation, Freedom Dabka Group, Harambee Dance Company, and The Sing Harlem Choir.

The Public Works community partner organizations are Brownsville Recreation Center (Brooklyn), Center for Family Life in Sunset Park (Brooklyn), DreamYard Project (Bronx), Fortune Society (Queens), and Military Resilience Project (all boroughs), along with alumni partners Casita Maria Center for Arts and Education, Children's Aid Society and Domestic Workers United.

Tickets to **AS YOU LIKE IT** are free, continuing The Public Theater's long-standing tradition of free programming and community engagement. Tickets are distributed, two per person (age 5+), at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park beginning at 12:00 p.m. on the day of each performance. All performances are at 8:00 p.m. The Public continues its partnership with **TodayTix**, who is the exclusive mobile ticket lottery partner. Tickets will be distributed by random mobile lottery on the TodayTix app each date that there is a public performance at the Delacorte Theater. Public Theater Members can reserve a seat with an additional contribution starting at \$75; for premium access to **AS YOU LIKE IT** and other Public Theater programming join us as a Public Supporter with a contribution starting at \$500. For information and to donate, call 212-967-7555.

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 at The Public's Central Park venue. The Delacorte Theater is accessible by entering at 81<sup>st</sup> Street and Central Park West, or 79<sup>th</sup> Street and Fifth Avenue.

**AS YOU LIKE IT** features scenic design by David Rockwell; costume design by Andrea Hood; lighting design by David Weiner; sound design by Jessica Paz; puppet design by James Ortiz; hair, wig, and makeup design by Dave Bova and J. Jared Janas; and music direction by Andrea Grody.

Lead support for **PUBLIC WORKS** is provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, The Hearst Foundations, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and The Tow Foundation. Additional support is provided by Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc., The Estée Lauder Companies Inc., The One World Fund, David Rockefeller Fund, The SHS Foundation, New York Community Trust, and New York State Council on the Arts. This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

### **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. Founded by Resident 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. In June 2016, The Public 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, which culminated in a new devised work, *Troy*.

Public Works is a national program with three affiliated theaters throughout the U.S. to create community-based inspired productions in the Public Works model for an impact across the country. The theaters are **Dallas Theater Center in collaboration with SMU Meadows School of the Arts**; **Seattle Repertory Theatre**, and **Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit**. In March 2017, Dallas Theater Center presented their inaugural Public Works Dallas production, *The Tempest*, directed by DTC Artistic Director Kevin Moriarty and featuring 200 Dallasites. The Public Works productions of *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Odyssey* are also available to be produced through Theatrical Rights Worldwide.

# **PUBLIC WORKS PARTNER BIOS:**

BROWNSVILLE RECREATION CENTER (*Brooklyn*) is one of 36 public Recreation Centers managed by the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. With extensive resources for youth and seniors, the center offers a vibrant space to tap into pursuits artistic and athletic alike. During the five-year partnership with Public Works, senior citizens have participated in dance, theater, storytelling, and scene study classes led by master teaching artists. This group has performed in every Public Works production at the Delacorte Theater from *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Odyssey* to last year's *Twelfth Night*. The seniors have also performed *Steel Magnolias*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as well as a staged reading of August Wilson's *Jitney*. The Brownsville Recreation Center hosts the Public Theater's Mobile Unit tours and members serve as community Ambassadors for downtown performances at The Public.

CASITA MARIA CENTER FOR ARTS AND EDUCATION (*Bronx*). Casita Maria Center for Arts & Education's mission is to empower youth and their families by creating a culture of learning through high quality social, cultural, and educational opportunities. It is one of the few organizations in the South Bronx that welcomes kids at the age of six and stays with them until college, while providing family learning through the arts. It is also different in the plurality of ways in which it can attract community members to utilize its services. Students introduce their parents to the Center's cultural programs, while public programs guide parents to the wide ranging educational programs offered. As part of Public Works, Casita Maria youth participated in acting classes that focused on ensemble building and Shakespeare. The Casita Maria community received the Mobile Unit tour of *Romeo and Juliet*. Members also serve as community Ambassadors for regular performances at The Public. Learn more at <u>casitamaria.org</u>.

**CENTER FOR FAMILY LIFE IN SUNSET PARK** (*Brooklyn*). Center for Family Life is a neighborhood-based social service organization in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. For 38 years, the Center has grown with the Sunset Park community, responding to emerging needs with effective and innovative programs. Today, CFL's comprehensive services in counseling, employment, education, the arts, and recreation engage more than 16,000 children and adults each year at eight community locations. This is Public Works' second year partnering with Center for Family Life in Sunset Park. As part of Public Works, parents and children from Sunset Park participated in classes focused on ensemble building, creativity, and collective storytelling. The Center for Family Life community serve as community Ambassadors for performances at The Public as well as contribute to the Public Works community newsletter. Learn more at <a href="https://www.cflsp.org">www.cflsp.org</a>.

**DOMESTIC WORKERS UNITED** (*All Boroughs, including Staten Island*) is a city-wide workers led 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 participated in a monthly play reading luncheon series that explored dozens of plays including *Eurydice*, *For Colored Girls..., A Raisin in the Sun, Antigone*, *The House of Bernarda Alba, Mother Courage and Her Children*, Shakespeare's sonnets, and many others. Members also serve as community Ambassadors for performances at The Public. Learn more at www.domesticworkersunited.org and visit the Facebook page.

**DREAMYARD PROJECT** (*Bronx*) is an arts and social justice organization dedicated to working with Bronx youth, families, schools and communities to build pathways toward equity and opportunity. DreamYard was 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 partnerships 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, DreamYard youth participate in classes in acting, Shakespeare and generative movement led by artists from The Public. The parents of DreamYard students also participate in weekly Shakespeare scene study classes led by Public Theater artists. The group has studied and performed scenes from *Hamlet, Julius Caesar*, and *As You Like It* and performed excerpts from all three plays at The Public Theater, DreamYard Art Center, and other partner sites. The DreamYard Project regularly hosts Mobile Unit tours, serve as community Ambassadors to performances at The Public, and contribute to the quarterly Public Works Newsletter.

**MILITARY RESILIENCE PROJECT** (*All Boroughs*) has a strong belief that resiliency and reintegration have as much to do with us in the community as they do with those who have served. The mission of the Military Resilience Project is to create opportunities for men and women who have served in the military to engage in community-based events that honor their unique experiences, while also allowing them to become part of a shared narrative. As a partner of Public Works, Military Resilience Project community members participate in acting classes that explore the veteran experience through Shakespeare's canon as well as singing workshops. Members serve as community Ambassadors for performances at The Public and contribute to the Public Works community newsletter. Learn more at milresilience.com

FORTUNE SOCIETY (*Queens*) is a nonprofit social service and advocacy organization founded in 1967, whose mission is to support successful reentry from incarceration 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, employment services, education, housing services, HIV/AIDS-case management, substance abuse and mental health treatment, family services, food and nutrition, discharge planning, benefits application assistance, and lifetime aftercare, among other services. In addition, the David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy (DRCPP), named in honor of Fortune's founder, promotes community education, technical assistance, trainings, research and advocacy to further advance Fortune's mission. As part of Public Works, members participate in a full year of classes in playwriting, acting, improvisation, storytelling, and clowning. The creation of the performance ensemble "Fortune Tellers" emerged from these classes and they have performed original pieces at The Public Theater, Fortune Society campuses, as well as other partner sites. This year, the Fortune Tellers will present scenes from August Wilson's *Seven Guitars*. The Fortune Society community receives the Mobile Unit tours and serve as community Ambassadors for performances at The Public.

**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-need New York City neighborhoods. As part of Public Works, the Children's Aid Society Chorus (a group of teenage girls led by Kelly Campbell) attends shows at Joe's Pub, Public Theater and receives master classes in singing, songwriting, movement, and acting. The chorus performs songs they have developed at The Public Theater and other venues. Public Works also partnered with the CAS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teen program, where deaf and hard of hearing youth studied the intersection of Shakespearean poetry and sign language. Their work culminated in a community performance of excerpts from *Romeo and Juliet*. Members serve as community Ambassadors for performances at The Public.

# **AS YOU LIKE IT COMPANY:**

LAURIE WOOLERY (Adapter and Director) is a director, playwright, educator, producer as well as the Director of Public Works at The Public Theater. She has worked at theaters across the country such as the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Yale Repertory Theater, Goodman Theatre, Cornerstone Theater Company, South Coast Repertory, Mark Taper Forum, Denver Center, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Theatre Center, Inge Center for the Arts, Plaza de la Raza/RedCAT, Deaf-West Theatre, Sundance Playwrights Lab as well as the Sundance Children's Theater. Woolery has directed world premieres of plays by Tanya Saracho, Marisela Trevino Orta, Aditi Kapil, K.J. Sanchez, Julie Marie Myatt, Cody Henderson, and Allison Carey among others. Her solo play Salvadorian Moon/African Sky was commissioned by Cornerstone Theater Company for their citywide Festival of Faith. She is the former Associate Artistic Director of Cornerstone Theater Company and former Conservatory Director at South Coast Repertory. Laurie has taught at Princeton, NYU, Brown, USC, Cal Arts, Citrus College, California State University at Northridge and Los Angeles and serves on the Board of the Latino Producers Action Network. Woolery is a founding member of the Sol Project and recipient of the Fuller Road Fellowship for Female Directors of Color.

**SHAINA TAUB** (*Adapter and Music & Lyrics; Jaques*) is a Vermont-raised, New York-based songwriter and performer. In 2016, Taub created the musical adaptation of Public Works' *Twelfth Night* and appeared in the Delacorte Theater production as Feste. Winner of a Jonathan Larson Grant and Ars Nova's 2012 Composer-in-Residence, she made her Lincoln Center solo concert debut in their 2015 American

Songbook series. She wrote songs for and co-starred in Bill Irwin and David Shiner's *Old Hats*, directed by Tina Landau at the Signature Theatre and A.C.T. She earned a Lucille Lortel Award nomination as Princess Mary in the off-Broadway run of *Natasha*, *Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*, and recently appeared in the original cast of *Hadestown* at New York Theatre Workshop. She has received fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, the Yaddo Colony, and the Sundance Institute. Her songs have been performed by Audra McDonald and Sutton Foster, and she wrote the theme song for Julie Andrews' Netflix series *Julie's Greenroom*, performed by Sara Bareilles. She's playing a year-long residency of monthly shows at Joe's Pub as a member of the 2017 Joe's Pub Working Group. She's currently writing a new musical about Alice Paul and the American women's suffrage movement. Her album *Visitors* is available now.

**SONYA TAYEH** (*Choreographer*) has gleaned accolades for her versatile work including two Emmy nominations for Fox's "So You Think You Can Dance" (2015 and 2013) and the 2014 Lucille Lortel Award and Obie Award for "Outstanding Choreography" for her work on David Henry Hwang's danceplay *Kung Fu*, for which she also received a Drama Desk nomination. Her select credits include directing and choreographing *You'll still call me by name* (New York Live Arts Commissioned Artist); Malpaso Dance Company (commissioned by the Joyce Theater/The Music Center); *Hurricane Diane* at Two River Theater (Dir. Leigh Silverman); *Hundred Days* at The Public's Under The Radar Festival (Dir. Anne Kauffman); *The Skin Of Our Teeth* at TFANA (Dir. Arin Arbus); Andrew Lippa's *Wild Party* at City Center Encores! (Dir. Leigh Silverman); Martha Graham Dance Company's *Lamentation Variation* series at The Joyce Theater; *Iphigenia in Aulis* at Classic Stage Company (Dir. Rachel Chavkin); *The Last Goodbye* at The Old Globe (Dir.Alex Timbers); and *Kung Fu* at Signature Theatre (Dir. Leigh Silverman).

ATO BLANKSON-WOOD (*Orlando*) most recently starred in *The Total Bent* at The Public Theater. He also appeared in *Hair* at The Delacorte as well as the Broadway and West End productions. His additional credits include The Foundry Theater's production of *O. Earth, Iphigenia in Aulis* at Classic Stage Company, and *Lysistrata Jones* off and on Broadway. Film/TV: *Detroit, It's Kind of a Funny Story* and "She's Gotta Have It" (Netflix). He is a 2017 recipient of the Leonore Annenberg Fellowship, a member of The Actors Center and holds a BFA from NYU as well as an MFA from Yale School of Drama.

**DARIUS de HAAS** (*Duke Senior*) has appeared on Broadway in *Kiss of the Spiderwoman, Carousel, Rent, The Gershwins' Fascinating Rhythm, Marie Christine, Shuffle Along.* His Off-Broadway credits include *The Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin* (Playwrights Horizons), *Saturn Returns* (The Public), and *Running Man* (Music Theater Group, Obie Award winner). Regional includes shows at ART, The Goodman, Westport Country Playhouse, The Alliance, and many others. As a concert artist he has performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center Songbook, London's Royal Festival Hall, The New York Festival of Song, Disney Concert Hall, and with numerous symphonies, as well as receiving great acclaim for his solo concerts performed all around the country. He is featured on several recordings including a CD of standards *Quiet Please* with pianist Steven Blier, *Day Dream* (*Variations on Strayhorn*), and many original cast recordings.

REBECCA NAOMI JONES (Rosalind) has appeared on Broadway in Significant Other, American Idiot, Passing Strange, and Hedwig and the Angry Inch. Her Off-Broadway credits include Marie and Rosetta (Atlantic Theater), Murder Ballad (Manhattan Theater Club, Lucille Lortel nomination/Lilly Award), Big Love (Signature Theater, Drama League nomination), The Fortress of Solitude (Public Theater), Love's Labour's Lost (The Public's Shakespeare in the Park). Other theater credits include God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater (Encores) and Cost of Living (Williamstown). She has appeared on film and television in Most Likely To Murder, The Big Sick, Ratter, Ordinary World, Passing Strange, "High Maintenance," "Odd Mom Out," "Sex&Drugs&Rock&Roll," "Good Girls Revolt," "Inside Amy Schumer," "Nurse Jackie," "Limitless," and "Difficult People." She has had solo concerts at Lincoln Center (American Songbook) and Apollo Café, and holds a BFA in Drama from the North Carolina School of the Arts.

**JOEL PEREZ** (*Touchstone*). His theater work includes *Fun Home* (Broadway and The Public Theater) and *Sweet Charity* (New Group; Lucille Lortel Award Winner for Outstanding Featured Actor in a Musical) as well as national and international tours of *In the Heights* and *Fame*. His TV work includes "Person of Interest" (CBS), "Odd Mom Out" (Bravo), "The Big C" (Showtime), "The Outs" (Vimeo) and "Black

Box" (ABC). He is an ensemble member of Broken Box Mime Theater and studied at Tufts University, The British American Drama Academy, and Upright Citizen's Brigade.

## **CAMEO APPEARANCES:**

**BRONX WRESTLING FEDERATION** (BWF) was founded in 2010 by Francisco Segundo, alias El Bronco Internacional. Francisco emigrated from the Dominican Republic where he began his career as a professional wrestler. The BWF build their own wrestling ring at Daro's Extreme Fitness, their home in the Bronx. As well as hosting Lucha Libre monthly events, BWF wrestlers visit children in hospitals, homes for the elderly, and engage in other community activities. The BWF has also been featured in TV and newspapers locally and internationally in Japan, France and the Dominican Republic. The BWF is Francisco Segundo's dream come true; "seguir en el mundo de la lucha libre."

**FREEDOM DABKA GROUP** is a professional dabka and zaffa team. They are a group of passionate artists, whom enjoy performing their ancestral folklore. Freedom Dabka Group, established in 2011, has gradually gained popularity within all Arab and non-Arab communities. They perform at various major events, weddings, and special parties. Their performances remain at a professional standard, offering a ton of excitement and high-energy.

HARAMBEE DANCE COMPANY. Founded in 1992 in Charleston, South Carolina, Harambee Dance Company pulls together the essence of African and African-American dance and music, presenting it from an innovative and exciting new contemporary perspective. In Swahili, Harambee means "let us pull together." Artistic Director and resident choreographer Sandella Malloy has developed a high-energy repertoire that pulls together African-based movement, modern dance forms, live percussion and original music, and vibrant costumes into captivating performances reflecting the majesty of the African Diaspora. Sandella, her husband Frank and their son/musical director Frank IV are the nucleus of the Harambee dance family. The 25-member company, which continues to ignite audiences around the world, is comprised of exceptionally skilled dancers and musicians versed in a multiplicity of styles and related art forms. The company's enlightening and thought provoking presentations challenge audiences to expand their perception of dance. These are "moves" that touch the soul, and are designed to build and strengthen a greater understanding of our diverse American cultural heritage.

THE SING HARLEM CHOIR, from producer Vy Higginsen, is a celebrated group of performers elevated from the Mama Foundation for the Arts' Music School of Gospel, Jazz and R&B. The Foundation, founded by writer/producer of *Mama, I Want to Sing,* is known to be a highly respected and influential source of education and self-development for young people as highlighted in the Emmy-award winning CBS "60 Minutes" coverage. This award winning and nationally recognized program offers performance choirs small, medium, and large and has been seen accompanying many of today's pop icons including Ariana Grande, Chance the Rapper, Pharrell Williams, Alessia Cara, and Madonna. Recent event performances include RFK Human Rights Benefit honoring Vice President Joe Biden, Stella McCartney's Pre-Fall Fashion Show, Jack & Jill's Night in Harlem *and* Ted Talks. Recent television performances include "NBC First Look," Nickelodeon "Halo Awards," "Wonderama," "The View," and "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon."

## **ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER:**

The world-renowned 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. This fall begins The Public's Astor Anniversary Season celebrating 50 years of new work at 425 Lafayette Street and the 50th Anniversary of HAIR which opened the landmark theater in October 1967. 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 by 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 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; the Under the Radar Festival, a yearly festival celebrating diverse and cutting-edge performance from the U.S. and abroad; and audience and artist development initiatives that range from the Emerging Writers Group to the Public Forum series. The Public's work is also seen on tour throughout the U.S. and internationally and in collaborations and co-productions with regional and international theaters. 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. The Public is currently represented on Broadway by the Tony Award-winning acclaimed American musical *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda. The Public has received 59 Tony Awards, 169 Obie Awards, 53 Drama Desk Awards, 54 Lortel Awards, 32 Outer Critics Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics Awards, and six Pulitzer Prizes. <a href="https://www.publictheater.org">www.publictheater.org</a>.