

**THE PUBLIC THEATER
AND
THE SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY
ANNOUNCE
NEW SHAKESPEARE INITIATIVE
FURTHERING COMMITMENT TO
SHAKESPEARE'S WORK**

**The Shakespeare Society Joins
The Public Theater
as The Public Shakespeare Initiative
Helmed by Shakespeare Society's Michael Sexton**

**Line-up for Public Shakespeare Presents and Shakespeare Talks to
Include Explorations of Justice, Joe Papp's Naked *Hamlet*,
Rage in *King Lear*, and Shakespeare's Infinite Fancy,
In Addition to Education and Artist Development Programs**

September 19, 2017 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) and The Shakespeare Society have announced that they will join forces to form the new **PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE INITIATIVE**, under the leadership of long-time Shakespeare Society Artistic Director, Michael Sexton. The Public Theater and The Shakespeare Society have long shared the passionately-held belief that Shakespeare is for everyone. For 20 years, The Shakespeare Society has realized this conviction through events combining commentary on and performances from Shakespeare's works; educational programs for the children of New York City; and artist development programs with theater professionals. At The Public, their programs will find a new home, and the **PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE INITIATIVE** will produce and present events and programs as multidimensional as the community of Shakespeare-lovers it serves.

"The Shakespeare Society has a long and wonderful history of exploring and illuminating Shakespeare for a broad audience," said **Public Theater Artistic Director Oskar Eustis**. "Michael Sexton is an old and trusted colleague. I am confident that, by joining forces, we will magnify each other's impact, and our audiences will reap that benefit."

The **PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE INITIATIVE**'s wide range of programming will include larger Public Shakespeare Presents evenings, blending incisive commentary by scholars and other thinkers with compelling live performances by artists of all disciplines; intimate Public Shakespeare Talks, giving audiences unique insight into the artistic and intellectual processes of leading Shakespeare practitioners working in the theater; Artist Development Programs, to cultivate some of the most visionary artistic minds working on Shakespeare today; and Education Programs, specifically the Hunts Point Children's Shakespeare Ensemble which The Shakespeare Society co-founded with the Hunts Point Alliance for

Children over a decade ago and which has offered hundreds of elementary and middle school students the opportunity to develop their confidence, knowledge, and creativity through the transformative experience of bringing Shakespeare's words to life onstage in the 10 Shakespeare productions the Ensemble has presented. The Hunts Point Children's Shakespeare Ensemble's year-round work will culminate in a special presentation of *As You Like It* in the Bronx and Manhattan in May 2018.

"I'm so excited to join forces with The Public Theater as our two organizations are perfectly aligned in mission and enthusiasm for Shakespeare's work, as well as in our shared belief that Shakespeare belongs to everyone," said **Director of Public Shakespeare Initiative Michael Sexton**. "I'm simultaneously intensely proud of our amazing Shakespeare Society community—our Board, the staff, our membership, artists, audiences, teaching artists, all the scholars who have lent us their wisdom and insight, all the school teachers who have made our workshops such a joy, and the thousands of elementary, middle and high school students from all five boroughs with whom it has been our privilege to work—and intensely humbled to be joining an institution as important and inclusive as The Public."

In the nearly 20 years since its founding, The Shakespeare Society's efforts to engage this diverse and varied community have sprung from the belief that Shakespeare's works—among the most universally studied, revered, and beloved written in the English language—illustrate the complex yet common humanity shared by all. With the **PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE INITIATIVE**, The Public Theater and The Shakespeare Society are committed to serving and growing a shared community to celebrate together the astonishing depth and breadth of humanity that Shakespeare captures with such beauty and enduring power in his plays and poetry.

"If Shakespeare can be truly internalized, he teaches anyone he touches to be better, more nuanced, more tolerant human beings and citizens. The pathways to his work vary, but the value of the journey is common to all," said **Shakespeare Society Board President K. Ann McDonald**. "I salute The Public Theater for stepping up now to renew and recreate vibrant and living Shakespeare on their stages and in our city. All of us at The Shakespeare Society are profoundly honored and moved that The Public Theater has chosen to form an alliance with us—welcoming our talented staff, and embracing the substantive programs we have built over the last two decades—to launch its new Public Shakespeare Initiative."

The 2017 Fall line-up of **PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE INITIATIVE** will feature an exciting series of one-night-only events exploring the ideas and themes of Shakespeare's greatest works. Highlights of the upcoming season include an exploration of justice in Shakespeare's "problem play" *Measure for Measure* as it relates to our society today, with Public Forum and Elevator Repair Service; a deep look into the history of Joe Papp's legacy of Shakespeare in New York through his own letters and archive; a conversation on rage and anguish in *King Lear*; and a discussion of the transcendent power of art, imagination, language, and love in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Tickets for **PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE TALKS: AND JUSTICE FOR ALL** can be accessed now by calling (212) 967-7555, visiting www.publictheater.org, or in person at the Taub Box Office at The Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street. Tickets for *Public Shakespeare Presents: Joe, Will and the Naked Hamlet, To Imagine An Antony— Shakespeare's Infinite Fancy, and Public Shakespeare Talks: Eyeless Rage – Anger in King Lear* will go on sale at a later date.

The Fall Public Shakespeare Initiative season will kick off with **PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE TALKS: AND JUSTICE FOR ALL** on **Sunday, October 1 at 7:00 p.m.** in Joe's Pub at The Public. How do we balance the rigors of justice with the values of mercy and rehabilitation? When the law itself is unjust, how are we to respond? Shakespeare pondered these questions over 400 years ago in *Measure for Measure*, and they remain of vital importance today. As Elevator Repair Service presents their take on Shakespeare's most famous "problem play," Public Forum joins with the Public Shakespeare Initiative for an evening of readings and conversation featuring a cast of artists, activists, and intellectuals looking at how we approach the idea of justice today through the lens of Shakespeare's play. With Tony Award-winning actor Jefferson Mays and more.

The Fall season will continue on **Monday, October 16 at 7:00 p.m.** with **PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE PRESENTS: JOE, WILL AND THE NAKED HAMLET**, a collaboration with the New York Public Library

for the Performing Arts in The Public's Newman Theater. From his epic confrontation with Robert Moses over building a theater for Free Shakespeare in the Park, to his first Shakespeare production at Astor Place—the so-called "Naked Hamlet" starring Martin Sheen and Cleavon Little—Joe Papp's abiding and complicated relationship with Shakespeare is the subject of our story. The Public Shakespeare Initiative will present Papp's evolving relationship with Shakespeare (from 1954 to 1968) through readings of his notebooks, letters, speeches, and other materials from the New York Shakespeare Festival collection at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, including rare footage from the early days of the Delacorte and the Mobile Theater. This exciting evening coincides with the production of Richard Nelson's *Illyria*.

November will feature **PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE TALKS: EYELESS RAGE—ANGER IN KING LEAR** a conversation about anger—noble, destructive, cleansing, and clarifying—in Shakespeare's tragedy of ungoverned rage and its consequences, *King Lear*. On **Monday, November 27 at 7:00 p.m.** the evening will feature a group of veterans of the role at The Public Theater in conversation with Public Shakespeare Initiative Director Michael Sexton and other special guests.

The Fall season events will conclude with **PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE PRESENTS: TO IMAGINE AN ANTONY— SHAKESPEARE'S INFINITE FANCY** on **Monday, December 18 at 7:00 p.m.** at The Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College. How did Shakespeare take the story of a middle-aged general risking his hard-won reputation as a soldier for a torrid love affair with his exotic, capricious girlfriend, and transmute them both into mythic figures of high romance and tragedy? Oxford scholar and prize-winning author of *The Genius of Shakespeare*, Jonathan Bate, will be joined by a cast of actors reading scenes from *Antony and Cleopatra*, leading us on a thrilling exploration of the destabilizing, transformational power of poetry, imagination, and love.

Support for the merging of The Shakespeare Society and Public Theater provided by the New York Merger, Acquisition, and Collaboration Fund.

The New York Merger, Acquisition, and Collaboration Fund (NYMAC) encourages and supports mergers, acquisitions, joint-ventures, and other types of formal, long-term collaborations between nonprofits in New York City. NYMAC's funders include Altman Foundation, The Booth Ferris Foundations, The Clark Foundation, The Heckscher Foundation for Children, The Lodestar Foundation, The New York Community Trust, SeaChange Capital Partners, and a number of philanthropic individuals.

ABOUT THE SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY:

Founded in 1997 by Nancy Becker and Adriana Mnuchin, and led for the past 10 years by Board President K. Ann McDonald and Artistic Director Michael Sexton, The Shakespeare Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the enjoyment, understanding, and appreciation of William Shakespeare's works through performance, commentary, and educational activities. The Shakespeare Society's humanist mission—artistic, literary, and educational—is to bring to everyone the joy and transformative power of Shakespeare's works. It is the only organization of its kind in New York City devoted entirely to Shakespeare. Its programs serve the city's entire population—laymen and academics, students and teachers, audience members and theater professionals, young and old. In 2007, The Shakespeare Society expanded its education programming dramatically through the founding of the Hunts Point Children's Shakespeare Ensemble and creation of development programs for theater artists. Over the past two decades, The Shakespeare Society has produced, directed, and presented over 175 humanities and artistic events exploring virtually all of Shakespeare's plays and poetry, and featuring actors performing excerpts from the plays, live and on film; academics discussing the plays' themes, language and meaning; singers performing portions of operas based on the plays (in collaboration with the Metropolitan Opera); dancers presenting excerpts from Shakespeare-inspired ballets (in collaboration with the American Ballet Theater and the New York City Ballet); and panel discussions with directors, actors, and other theater-makers about how they bring Shakespeare's works to the stage. In support of its mission to strive to be a Shakespeare center for all New York audiences and institutions, and to shine a light on Shakespeare productions and other Shakespeare offerings from all over New York, The Shakespeare Society has partnered over the years with myriad other organizations in presenting its events, including other humanities, cultural, artistic, and educational organizations including The New York Public Library

for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center Theater's Mostly Mozart Festival, Poets House, The Players Foundation for Theatre Education, The Folger Shakespeare Library, The English Speaking Union, NYU Graduate Acting Program, Rutgers University, New York Review of Books, School of the Visual Arts, Globe Education, the Shakespeare Institute, and theaters – large and small including The Public Theater, Red Bull Theater, Theater for a New Audience, Letter of Marque Theater Company, Hudson Valley Shakespeare, Fiasco Theater Company, New York Theater Workshop, Classic Stage Company, Westport County Playhouse, Pearl Theater Company, BAM, and the Royal Shakespeare Company. And for the last 10 years and even longer for some Board members, The Shakespeare Society has had Board members without whom it would never have survived, and who are thrilled to have shepherded The Society into this wonderful alliance with The Public Theater. www.shakespearesociety.org

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 and in Fall 2017, John Leguizamo's *Latin History for Morons*. 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. www.publictheater.org.

PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE INITIATIVE TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE TALKS: AND JUSTICE FOR ALL** can be accessed now by calling (212) 967-7555, visiting www.publictheater.org, or in person at the Taub Box Office at The Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street. Tickets for *Public Shakespeare Presents: Joe, Will and the Naked Hamlet, To Imagine An Antony— Shakespeare's Infinite Fancy, and Public Shakespeare Talks: Eyeless Rage – Anger in King Lear* will go on sale at a later date.

There is no food or drink minimum for the Public Shakespeare Initiative programming in Joe's Pub. Please note the final line-up is subject to change. The Library at The Public is open nightly for food and drinks, beginning at 5:30 p.m., and Joe's Pub at The Public continues to offer some of the best music in the city. For more information, visit www.publictheater.org.

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