

**THE PUBLIC THEATER
ANNOUNCES
NEW INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT
EMERGING ARTISTS AND NEW WORK
PUBLIC STUDIO**

**TWO NEW PLAYS
IN REPERTORY THIS SPRING FOR ONLY \$10**

**THE URBAN RETREAT by A. Zell Williams
Directed by Liesl Tommy**

**MANHATTA by Mary Kathryn Nagle
Directed Kate Whoriskey**

March 11, 2014 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced an exciting new writers' initiative today, **PUBLIC STUDIO**, which will present two new plays this spring by emerging and up-and-coming playwrights. The two plays will run in repertory from May 15 to May 25 in The Public's Shiva Theater and will be presented as pared-down productions with the low ticket price of only \$10. Following in the footsteps of the acclaimed Public Lab series, **PUBLIC STUDIO** is conceived as a way to build on The Public's mission to support new and emerging artists and to continue making new work accessible to all audiences.

PUBLIC STUDIO is made possible with the generous support of **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** and the **Time Warner Foundation**.

In this inaugural year, **PUBLIC STUDIO** will present **THE URBAN RETREAT** by **A. Zell Williams**, directed by **Liesl Tommy**, in repertory with **MANHATTA**, written by Public Theater Emerging Writers Group alumni **Mary Kathryn Nagle** and directed by **Kate Whoriskey**. In its inaugural year, the two Public Studio plays will rehearse for two weeks then run in repertory with each piece receiving seven performances over the course of ten days.

Last year, The Tow Foundation launched a new Playwright Residency program designed to provide an annual salary and benefits to an emerging playwright. **A. Zell Williams** has been awarded this one-year residency to provide him with the time and resources to write generally as well as develop **THE URBAN RETREAT**.

"It is vital for early career writers to gain that invaluable experience of developing their work on its feet, in the rehearsal room with directors and actors and in front of an audience," said **Associate Artistic Director Mandy Hackett**. "Public Studio will do just that: allow writers to delve deeply into their work and provide opportunity for growth and discovery. Our inaugural year will feature two remarkably talented and exciting emerging writers. Zell and Mary Kathryn are two distinct and exhilarating new voices writing

ambitious and important new plays. We are delighted to share their work with our audiences with the launch of this new program.”

PUBLIC STUDIO is a new performance series dedicated exclusively to developing the work of emerging writers. In a laboratory environment, writers will be in rehearsal with actors and a director, incorporate bare bones design elements, and open the process to an audience over a series of performances. More than a reading or workshop, but not a full production, this middle step affords early career writers the important opportunity to deepen their experience of working collaboratively over an extended rehearsal period and to see their work staged in front of an audience.

ABOUT THE URBAN RETREAT:

Fiercely funny, gripping and raw, A. Zell Williams’s **THE URBAN RETREAT** is a powerful new American play about Chaucher Mosley, an English teacher and long-rejected writer, hired by a publisher of Urban Lit to turn the grandiose ramblings of a rap superstar into a compelling memoir. Unimpressed by the material but desperate for money, Mosley takes on the assignment. But when the rapper turns out to be a former student that Mosley unknowingly failed, the writing process becomes a surprising and deeply honest exchange about survival, selling out and what it means to be a black man in America today. United by the power of their words and a shared need to face the past, Mosley and Trench discover a brotherhood that transforms them both. Liesl Tommy, Associate Artistic Director of Berkeley Rep, directs this bold drama about the clashing experiences and beliefs of two men of the same race from very different worlds, both fighting to tell their own story.

A. ZELL WILLIAMS holds the Tow Foundation Emerging Playwright Residency at New York’s Public Theater. His productions include *In A Daughter’s Eyes* and *Down Past Passyunk* (InterAct Theatre, Philadelphia). His awards include the Marin Theatre Company Emerging American Playwright Prize, The Terrence McNally New Play Award, NYU’s Goldberg Playwriting Award, National New Play Network’s Smith Prize. He has been nominated for the Williamstown Theatre Festival’s L. Arnold Weissberger Award, The Playwright of New York (PoNY) Fellowship, and was a finalist for the Yale Drama Series for Emerging Playwrights and Kitchen Dog Theatre’s New Works Festival. His plays include *The Audacity*, *The Biggest Valley*, and *Carroll Gardens*.

The Tow Foundation has awarded A. Zell Williams a residency to provide him with the time and resources to write, generally, and develop this new play for production.

LIESL TOMMY (*The Urban Retreat* Director) has directed *The Good Negro* at The Public. As a director, her world premieres include *Party People*; *The White Man - A Complex Declaration of Love*; *Peggy Picket Sees the Face of God*; *Eclipsed*; *A History of Light*; *Angela’s Mixtape*; *A Stone’s Throw*; *Bus and Family Ties*; and *Misterioso 119*. Tommy’s other directing credits include *Hamlet* (California Shakespeare Theater); *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* (Huntington Theatre Company); *American Buffalo* (CenterStage in Baltimore); *He is Here He Says I Say* (Sundance East Africa, Manda Island, Kenya); *The Piano Lesson* (Yale Repertory Theatre); *Ruined* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre); *Crimes of the Heart* (McCarter Theatre Center); *Book of Life* (Sundance Institute East Africa); *Yankee Tavern*, *Stick Fly* (Contemporary American Theater Festival); and *A Christmas Carol* (Trinity Repertory Company).

ABOUT MANAHATTA:

A gripping journey from the fur trade of the 1600s to the stock trade of today, Mary Kathryn Nagle’s **MANAHATTA** tells the story of Jane Snake, a brilliant young Native American woman with a Stanford MBA. Jane reconnects with her ancestral homeland, known as Manahatta, when she moves from her home with the Delaware Nation in Anadarko, Oklahoma to New York for a job at a major investment bank just before the financial crisis of 2008. Jane’s struggle to reconcile her new life with the expectations and traditions of the family she left behind is powerfully interwoven with the heartbreaking history of how the Lenape were forced from their land. Both old and new Manahatta converge in a brutal lesson about the dangers of living in a society where there’s no such thing as enough. Written in The Public Theater’s Emerging Writers Group, Mary Kathryn Nagle’s **MANAHATTA** is a stunning new play

about the discovery that the only thing you can truly own is who you are and where you come from. Kate Whoriskey (*The Miracle Worker*, *Ruined*) directs.

We are honored to commence the first performance of the play on May 15 with an opening prayer in Lenape from the Delaware Tribe's Tribal Operations Manager and former Chief, Curtis Zunigha. The run of **MANAHATTA** will also include post-show discussions featuring local Native theater companies. The panel after the Sunday, May 18 performance will feature Spiderwoman Theater and the panel after the Wednesday, May 21 performance will feature The Eagle Project. Please check www.publictheater.org for further details about these panels and other ancillary events.

MARY KATHRYN NAGLE was born in Oklahoma City and is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and an honorary member of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska. She studied theater at Georgetown University, and went on to study law at Tulane Law School, where she graduated *summa cum laude* and was the recipient of the Judge John Minor Wisdom Award. Nagle is a 2013 alumni of The Public Theater's Emerging Writers Group, where she wrote and developed *Manahatta*. Recent productions include AMERINDA's presentation of *Miss Lead* at 59E59 Theaters in January 2014. Her play *Sliver of a Full Moon* was recently presented at the United States Capitol in honor of the one-year anniversary of President Obama's signing of the re-authorization of the Violence Against Women Act into law. She is a current member of the Civilians 2013 Research & Development Group, where she is working on her next play documenting the intersections of climate change and indigenous communities, entitled *Fairly Traceable*.

The Time Warner Foundation is the founding sponsor of the Emerging Writers Group at The Public and has expanded its support to include the Public Studio.

KATE WHORISKEY (*Manahatta* Director) has directed the Pulitzer Prize-winning world premiere of *Ruined* (Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel nominations) at MTC. Internationally she has directed *Magdalena* at the Chatelet Theatre in Paris and Teatro Municipal de São Paulo. Her additional Broadway credits include *The Miracle Worker*. Her Off-Broadway credits include *How I Learned to Drive* (Second Stage), *The Piano Teacher* (Vineyard Theatre), *Oroonoko* (Theatre for A New Audience), the world premieres of *Fabulation* and *Inked Baby* (Playwrights Horizons), and *Massacre* at the Labyrinth Theatre. Regionally, she has directed productions at The Goodman, The Geffen, American Repertory Theatre, The Shakespeare Theatre, The Huntington, South Coast Rep, Baltimore CenterStage, Sundance Theatre Lab, New York Stage and Film, among others.

ABOUT THE TIME WARNER FOUNDATION

The Time Warner Foundation is a private, nonprofit foundation that is wholly supported by Time Warner Inc. and its subsidiary companies Home Box Office, Inc., Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. and Warner Bros. Entertainment, Inc. Its mission is to seek innovative and powerful ways to discover, nurture and celebrate the next generation of storytellers. Through its New Works/New Voices initiatives, the Foundation strives to build impactful partnerships with best-in-class nonprofit organizations that push the boundaries of artist development and support underrepresented storytellers. The Foundation's ultimate goal is the cultivation of an artistic community that is rich, vibrant and relevant to audiences of today and tomorrow.

ABOUT THE TOW FOUNDATION

The Tow Foundation, established in 1988 by Leonard and Claire Tow, funds projects and collaborative ventures in fields where there are opportunities for breakthroughs, reform and benefits for underserved populations. Investments focus on the support of innovative programs in the areas of juvenile justice reform, groundbreaking medical research, cultural institutions, and higher education. In 2013, The Tow Foundation launched a Playwright Residency program, designed to provide an annual salary and benefits to an emerging playwright who is scheduled to have his/her New York City production debut with a major Off-Broadway theater. Five different theaters were awarded \$75,000 based on both their commitment to the designated playwright and the evidence that this one year grant would serve as a

transformative experience for the playwright. The productions associated with this grant will be presented during 2014 and 2015. For more information, visit www.towfoundation.org.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER AT ASTOR PLACE

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Oskar Eustis and Executive Director Patrick Willingham, The Public Theater is the only theater in New York that produces Shakespeare, the classics, musicals, contemporary and experimental pieces in equal measure. 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 its beloved, 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, a new initiative that is designed to cultivate new connections and new models of engagement with artists, audiences and the community each year; new and experimental stagings at The Public at Astor Place, including Public Lab; and a range of artist and audience development initiatives including its Public Forum series, which brings together theater artists and professionals from a variety of disciplines for discussions that shed light on social issues explored in Public productions. The Public Theater 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. Key elements of the revitalization included infrastructure updates to the 158-year old building, as well as construction of new exterior entry stair and glass canopy; installation of ramps for improved accessibility; an expanded and refurbished lobby; the addition of a mezzanine level with a new restaurant lounge, The Library at The Public, designed by the Rockwell Group. The LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust provides leadership support for The Public Theater's year-round activities. www.publictheater.org

TICKET INFORMATION

Public Studio inaugural plays, ***THE URBAN RETREAT*** and ***MANAHATTA***, will begin performances in The Public's Shiva Theater on Thursday, May 15 and run in repertory through Sunday, May 25. All tickets are only \$10 and will go on sale in April.

The repertory performance schedule is Thursday through Sunday at 7:00 p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays at 2:00 p.m. There is no performance on Monday, May 19. (There is an added performance on Tuesday, May 20 and Wednesday, May 21. The performances on Saturday, May 17 are at 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.).

The Library at The Public is open nightly for food and drinks, beginning at 5:30 p.m., with brunch on select weekends, 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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