

THE PUBLIC THEATER ANNOUNCES COMPLETE CASTING FOR *TOAST*

Written by Lemon Andersen
Directed by Elise Thoron

Performances Begin Tuesday, April 21

March 26, 2015 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director Patrick Willingham) announced complete casting today for the Public Lab production of *TOAST*, written by **Lemon Andersen**. Directed by Elise Thoron, *TOAST* begins previews on Tuesday, April 21 and runs through Sunday, May 10, with an official press opening on Tuesday, May 5.

Free tickets to the first preview on Tuesday, April 21 will be available via **TodayTix** mobile lottery, launching Tuesday, April 14. Winners will be notified by email and push notifications between 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. on the day of the first preview. Winners must confirm their winning tickets in the TodayTix app within one hour of being notified.

Single tickets, starting at \$20, are available now and 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. 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.

The complete cast for *TOAST* features **Phillip James Brannon** (*Annabelle Jones*), **Dan Butler** (*Sheriff Jody*), **Teddy Cañez** (*G.I. Joe*), **Keith David** (*Dolomite*), **Hill Harper** (*Hard Rock*), **John Earl Jelks** (*Stackolee*), **Jonathan Earl Peck** (*Hobo Ben*), and **Armando Riesco** (*Jesse James*).

TOAST is an electrifying new play by acclaimed spoken word artist and Tony Award-winning writer **Lemon Andersen**, directed by Andersen's *County of Kings* collaborator **Elise Thoron**. A Public Theater commission first presented at The Public's Under the Radar Festival, *TOAST* ingeniously weaves major characters from black oral narratives into a gripping story about a group of inmates fighting to keep their minds free amidst the 1971 riots that rocked Attica Prison. After 27 years served for murder in Attica's D-Block, Willie Green, aka the legendary Dolomite, has become an unlikely father figure to his cellmates, folklore heroes like Jesse James, Hobo Ben, Annabelle Jones, Stackolee and Hard Rock. When word brews throughout Attica that a riot is coming, Dolomite has to decide whether to join in or bet on the quickly approaching chance to taste freedom. Honoring the spoken word narratives recited in pool halls, bars and prisons across America by generations of black poets, *TOAST* is a stunning new play about men trying to live free in a system—and a world—designed to keep them chained. *TOAST* was developed, in part, at the Sundance Institute Theatre Program. Funding for the development of *TOAST* is provided by The Time Warner Foundation, and the MAP Fund, a program of Creative Capital supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

TOAST features scenic design by Alexis Distler, costume design by Dede Ayite, lighting design by Jen Schriever, and sound design by Rob Kaplowitz.

LEMON ANDERSEN (*Playwright*) For a decade, his performances have rocked iconic venues including San Francisco's Theatre On The Square, Gammage Performing Arts Center in Arizona, Charleston's Spoleto

Festival, New Haven's Arts & Ideas Festival, the Chicago Theatre and the Kodak Theatre in L.A. Spike Lee produced Andersen's memoir *County of Kings* at The Public, which was published in 2010, and awarded the New York Book Festival's Grand Prize. Andersen won a Tony Award in 2003 for *Def Poetry Jam*, produced by Russell Simmons and broadcast on HBO for six seasons. He trained with The Public's Shakespeare Lab and his work has received support from the Sundance Institute. As an author, he has published a book of new poems titled *Straightrazor* and his writing was excerpted by actor/activist Hill Harper in *Letters To An Incarcerated Brother*.

ELISE THORON (*Director*) is a playwright, director, and educator who brings stories which have not been widely heard to life on the stage. She developed and directed Andersen's *County of Kings* with Andersen performing it at The Public, Spotleto, and venues around the world. Her plays have been produced in the U.S. and Europe, including *Green Violin*, music by Frank London; *Prozak and the Platypus*, music by Jill Sobule (also album/graphic novella); and *Charlotte: Life? or Theater?* based on paintings of the German Jewish artist, Charlotte Salomon. She also created *Recycling: washi tales*, a theater piece from the art work of distinguished Japanese paper artist Kyoko Ibe. At American Place Theater, Thoron with Wynn Handman, co-founded *Literature to Life*, a performance-based literacy program, which presents professionally staged adaptations of American literary works and partners with NYC schools and performing arts centers around the country. She continues as its Associate Artistic Director today.

PHILLIP JAMES BRANNON (*Annabelle Jones*) has appeared Off-Broadway in *Bootycandy*, *The City of Conversation*, *Love and Information*, and *Belleville*. His film and television credits include *Contagion*; and "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit."

DAN BUTLER (*Sheriff Jody*) has appeared at The Public Theater in *Much Ado About Nothing* and on Broadway in *Twentieth Century*, *Biloxi Blues*, and *The Hothouse*. His additional Off-Broadway credits include *The Weir*; *Olive and the Bitter Ends*; *The Irish Curse*; *Beast*, *Old Money*; *The Only Worse Thing You Could Have Told Me*, which he also wrote; *The Lisbon Traviata*; *Waiting for Godot*; and *True West*. His film and television credits include *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Captain Ron*, *The Fan*, "Roseanne," "From the Earth to the Moon." "Suddenly Susan," "Frasier," and many others.

TEDDY CAÑEZ (*G.I. Joe*) has appeared on Broadway in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. His film and television credits include *Sleepwalk with Me*, *A Most Violent Year*, "The Wire," "How to Make It in America," "The Mob Doctor," and "Madame Secretary."

KEITH DAVID (*Dolomite*) has appeared at The Public in *Othello*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Waiting for Godot*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *La Boheme*, *Coriolanus*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Kit Marlow*. His Broadway credits include *Hot Feet*, *Seven Guitars*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Jelly's Last Jam*, *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Lady from Dubuque*. His film and television credits include *Armageddon*; *There's Something About Mary*; *Pitch Black*; *Where The Heart Is*; *Highway*; *Sons of Liberty*; "Gargoyles"; "The Job"; "The Big House"; "ER"; "Adventure Time"; "Community"; and many others.

HILL HARPER (*Hard Rock*) has appeared at The Public in *Dogeaters*, and his additional Off-Broadway credit includes *Blue*. His film and television credits include *He Got Game*; *Beloved*; *In Too Deep*; *The Skulls*; *The Visit*; *The Breed*; *30 Days*; *The Volunteer, 1982*; *Parts Per Billion*; "City of Angels"; "The Handler"; "CSI: NY"; "Covert Affairs"; and others.

JOHN EARL JELKS (*Stackolee*) has appeared on Broadway in *Holler If Ya Hear Me*, *Radio Gold*, and *Gem of the Ocean*. His Off-Broadway credits include *Fetch Clay*, *Make Men*; *The Break of Noon*; and *The First Breeze of Summer*. His film and television credits include *A Powerful Thang*, *Enter the Dangerous Mind*, and "Blue Bloods."

JONATHAN EARL PECK (*Hobo Ben*) has appeared on Broadway in *The Lion in Winter*; *Words & Music*; and *The Rothschilds*. His Off-Broadway credits include *Three Sisters*, *A Soldier's Play*, and *Black*.

ARMANDO RIESCO (*Jesse James*)'s theater credits include *The Happiest Song Plays Last*, *Olives and Blood*, *Water by the Spoonful*, *Becky Shaw*, *Sonia Flew*, *Four*, *Eleven Rooms of Proust*, *Bash*, and *This is our Youth*. His film and television credits include *Adult World*, *CHE*, *Putzel*, *Fever Pitch*, *National Treasure*, *25th Hour*, *Garden State*, "Elementary," "Blue Bloods," "A Gifted Man," "Army Wives," "Kings," "Fringe," and others.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER

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. www.publictheater.org

The LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust provides leadership support for The Public Theater's year-round activities; Bank of America, Proud Season Sponsor of Shakespeare in the Park; The Harold & Mimi Steinberg New Play Development Fund at The Public Theater Supports the Creation and Development of New Plays; The Philip and Janice Levin Foundation - Lead Supporter of The Public's Access and Engagement Programming; The Time Warner Foundation, Founding Sponsor of The Emerging Writers Group; Delta Air Lines, Official Airline of The Public Theater; *New York Magazine* is the official print sponsor of The Public Theater's 2014-2015 downtown season; Public support is provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency; and the National Endowment for the Arts, an independent federal agency.

TICKET INFO

TOAST will run at The Public Theater on Tuesday, April 21 through Sunday, May 10, with an official press opening on Tuesday, May 5 in the Shiva Theater.

The performance schedule will be Tuesday through Fridays at 7:00 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays at 1:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Member tickets, priced at \$15, and single 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.

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