

THE PUBLIC THEATER ANNOUNCES LINE-UP AND CASTING FOR SIXTH SEASON OF PUBLIC STUDIO

TWO NEW PRODUCTIONS THIS SPRING
ALL TICKETS ONLY \$15

THE LOOPHOLE

Book and Bars by Zeniba Britt
Music and Lyrics by Jay Adana
Directed by Awoye Timpo

CULLUD WATTAH

Written by Erika Dickerson-Despenza
Directed by Candis C. Jones

February 13, 2019 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced the sixth season of **PUBLIC STUDIO** today, which will present two new works this spring. Continuing The Public's commitment to nurturing new playwrights, the two productions will run in succession in The Public's Shiva Theater and be presented as pared-down productions with the low ticket price of \$15. This vital program continues The Public's mission of making new work by emerging artists accessible to all audiences.

In this sixth year, **PUBLIC STUDIO** will present the first act of *THE LOOPHOLE*, an epic new musical-in-progress by Public Theater #BARS alumnae **Zeniba Britt** and **Jay Adana**, directed by **Awoye Timpo**, running Wednesday, February 20 through Friday, February 22. *THE LOOPHOLE* is a folk/rap alternative history of a still resonant civil war.

Complete casting for *THE LOOPHOLE* includes **Jay Adana** (*Alligator Queen*), **Zeniba Britt** (*Polly Danfield/Darius*), **Cherrye J. Davis** (*Annmarie/Bree/Union Soldier*), **Antwayn Hopper** (*Acker*), **Daniel Jenkins** (*Henry Danfield*), **Danny Rothman** (*General Dasch and others*), and **Jason Veasey** (*Pat and others*).

THE LOOPHOLE features scenic design by Arnulfo Maldonado, costume design by Andy Jean, lighting design by Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew, sound design by Megan Culley, fight direction by UnkleDave's Fight-house, music direction by Rodney Bush, and choreography by Hope Boykin.

The second new work is the play *CULLUD WATTAH* by **Erika Dickerson-Despenza**, directed by **Candis C. Jones**, running Thursday, March 7 through Sunday, March 10. *CULLUD WATTAH* is a stunning new play about three generations of Black women living through the current water crisis in Flint, Michigan.

Complete casting for **CULLUD WATTAH** includes **Deonna Bouye** (*Marion*), **Alana Raquel Bowers** (*Reesee*), **Caroline Stefanie Clay** (*Big Ma*), **Nikiya Mathis** (*Ainee*), and **Kara Young** (*Plum*).

CULLUD WATTAH features scenic design by Arnulfo Maldonado, costume design by Ntokozo Fuzunina Kunene, lighting design by Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew, sound design by Megan Culley, and movement direction by Adesola Osakalumi.

PUBLIC STUDIO is a performance series dedicated exclusively to developing the work of emerging writers. In a laboratory environment, writers rehearse 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. Previous Public Studio plays include *Masculinity Max* by MJ Kaufman, *Ain't No Mo'* by Jordan E. Cooper, *On the Grounds of Belonging* by Ricardo Pérez González, *Wild Goose Dreams* by Hansol Jung, *Pretty Hunger* by Patricia Ione Lloyd, *Teenage Dick* by Mike Lew, *Ping Pong* by Rogelio Martinez, *Fidelis* by Christina Gorman, *Manahatta* by Mary Kathryn Nagle, and *The Urban Retreat* by A. Zell Williams. *Wild Goose Dreams* made its mainstage debut this past fall, and *Ain't No Mo'* will do the same this spring as part of the 2018-19 Public Theater season.

PUBLIC STUDIO was founded with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and The Time Warner Foundation. Continued support for Public Studio is provided by The Time Warner Foundation.

ABOUT THE LOOPHOLE:

The Lisa Quiroz Emerging Writers Groups' Public Studio presents the first act of **THE LOOPHOLE**, an epic new musical-in-progress by Public Theater #BARS alumnae and Dramatists Guild Foundation Fellows **Zeniba Britt** (Book and Bars) and **Jay Adana** (Music and Lyrics). It is 1863 and America is at war with itself. Just outside of Atlanta, Polly, a biracial black cartographer, spends her days working with her white father making and selling maps. Her father has set up his family's former plantation as the perfect place to hide his gifted daughter, but her lover Acker wants her to leave for an untethered life out west. As the war closes in, Polly must choose to protect her work and privilege or fight for love and freedom with an all black battalion of the Union Army. Fresh from *Good Grief* and *The Homecoming Queen*, **Awoye Timpo** directs this folk/rap alternative history of a still resonant civil war.

ZENIBA BRITT (The Loophole *Book & Bars/Polly Danfield/Darius*) is a multidisciplinary arts scientist from Los Angeles, CA. She has produced, written, and directed musical shorts, web series, docuseries, music videos, concerts, and immersive events. As a performing artist, she was recently seen Off-Broadway as Blue in *afloat* (WP Theater) and on TV as herself in "The Great American Read" (PBS). She is a 2018/19 Dramatist Guild Foundation Fellow, 2017 #BARS at The Public Residency Writer, and 2016 Independent Film School Fellow.

JAY ADANA (The Loophole *Music and Lyrics/Alligator Queen*) is a Los Angeles transplant, 2019 Dramatist Guild Foundation Fellow, 2018 Jonathan Larson Grant Award winner, and 2017 #BARS at The Public Residency Writer. She wrote the lyrics for *The Woodsman* (New World Stages) and contributed music and lyrics to Jeff Augustin's *The Last Tiger in Haiti* (Berkeley Rep/La Jolla Playhouse). Performance credits include *The Woodsman* (Ars Nova) and *On The Head Of A Pin* (59E59).

AWOYE TIMPO (The Loophole *Director*). Timpo's Off-Broadway credits include *Good Grief* (Vineyard Theatre), *The Revolving Cycles Truly and Steadily Roll'd* (Playwrights Realm), and *The Homecoming Queen* (Atlantic Theater). Her regional credits include *Paradise Blue* (Long Wharf Theatre), and her other credits include *Carnaval* (National Black Theater); *Sister Son/ji* (Billie Holiday Theatre); *The Vanished* (site-specific); *Skeleton Crew* (Chester Theater Company); *Ndebele Funeral* (59E59, Edinburgh Festival/Summerhall, South African tour). Timpo also produced CLASSIX, a series exploring classic plays by Black playwrights.

ABOUT CULLUD WATTAH:

The 2018 Relentless Award Semifinalist and poet-playwright **Erika Dickerson-Despenza** makes her Public Theater debut with a stunning new play about three generations of Black women living through the current water crisis in Flint, Michigan. It's been 936 days since Marion's family has had clean water. When local activists file a class action lawsuit against the city, Marion—a third-generation employee at General Motors—must decide how best to support her two daughters, sister, and mother while lead seeps into the community, their home, and their bodies. As corrosive memories and secrets rise among them, the family wonders if they'll ever be able to filter out the truth. Directed by Lilly Award winner **Candis C. Jones**, **CULLUD WATTAH** asks if love, faith, and family can withstand America's systemic injustices.

ERIKA DICKERSON-DESPENZA (*Cullud Wattah Playwright*) is a Blk feminist poet-playwright, educator, and grassroots organizer from Chicago, Illinois. She's a 2018-2019 Dramatists Guild Foundation Fellow, The Lark's 2018 Van Lier New Voices Fellow, and a 2018 Relentless Award Semifinalist. Dickerson-Despenza is a 2019-2020 member of Ars Nova Play Group and a member of Ensemble Studio Theatre's Obie-winning Youngblood collective. Select stage plays include: *ocean's lip/heaven's shore*, *took/tied/hung/split*, *shadow/land*, and *cullud wattah*. In addition to this water tetralogy, Dickerson-Despenza is currently developing a 10-play Katrina Cycle, including [*hieroglyph*], focused on the effects of Hurricane Katrina and its state-sanctioned man-made disaster.

CANDIS C. JONES (*Cullud Wattah Director*). Her credits include *Pipeline* (Detroit Public Theater), *As Is* (The Lark), *Nike* (A.C.T. New Strands Festival), *Gloria* (AADA), *Brother Rabbit* (New Black Fest), *Name Calling* (Kennedy Center, Dance Place), *The Fire This Time* Festival (Kraine Theater), *48Hours in...™ Harlem* (NBT), *New Shoes* (The Drama League), *Morning in America* (Primary Stages), and *TEMBO!* (Dramatic Adventure Theatre). Her credits as assistant director include *Oedipus El Rey* (The Public Theater) and *The Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin* (NY City Center). She has received a Lilly Award, and is a 2018-2020 WP Theater Lab Fellow and Drama League Alumni.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER:

THE PUBLIC is theater of, by, and for all people. Artist-driven, radically inclusive, and fundamentally democratic, The Public continues the work of its visionary founder Joe Papp as a civic institution engaging, both on-stage and off, with some of the most important ideas and social issues of today. Conceived over 60 years ago as one of the nation's first nonprofit theaters, The Public has long operated on the principles that theater is an essential cultural force and that art and culture belong to everyone. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Oskar Eustis and Executive Director Patrick Willingham, The Public's wide breadth of programming includes an annual season of new work at its landmark home at Astor Place, Free Shakespeare in the Park at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, The Mobile Unit touring throughout New York City's five boroughs, Public Forum, Under the Radar, Public Studio, Public Works, Public Shakespeare Initiative, and Joe's Pub. Since premiering *HAIR* in 1967, The Public continues to create the canon of American Theater and is currently represented on Broadway by the Tony Award-winning musical *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 59 Tony Awards, 170 Obie Awards, 53 Drama Desk Awards, 54 Lortel Awards, 32 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. publictheater.org

TICKET INFORMATION

THE LOOPHOLE will begin performances in The Public's Shiva Theater on Wednesday, February 20 and run through Friday, February 22. **CULLUD WATTAH** will begin performances in The Public's Shiva Theater on Thursday, March 7 and run through Sunday, March 10.

Public Supporter, Member, Partner, and single tickets, priced at \$15, 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 The Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street.

The performance schedule for **THE LOOPHOLE** is Wednesday through Friday at 7:00 p.m. The performance schedule for **CULLUD WATTAH** is Thursday through Sunday at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday at 1:00 p.m.

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 Public Theater is located at 425 Lafayette Street. For more information, visit www.publictheater.org

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