

**THE PUBLIC THEATER
CONTINUES
57 YEARS OF
FREE SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK
AT THE DELACORTE THEATER**

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Directed by Kenny Leon

May 21-June 23

CORIOLANUS

Directed by Daniel Sullivan

July 16-August 11

Public Works' Musical Adaptation of

HERCULES

Music by Alan Menken

Lyrics by David Zippel

Book by Kristoffer Diaz

Choreography by Chase Brock

Directed by Lear deBessonet

August 31-September 8

**THE JEROME L. GREENE FOUNDATION & BANK OF AMERICA
RETURN AS SEASON SPONSORS OF FREE SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK**

February 6, 2019 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced the line-up today for the 2019 Free Shakespeare in the Park season, continuing a 57-year tradition of free theater in Central Park. Since 1962, over five million people have enjoyed more than 150 free productions of Shakespeare and other classical works and musicals at the Delacorte Theater. Conceived by founder Joseph Papp as a way to make great theater accessible to all, The Public's Free Shakespeare in the Park continues to be the bedrock of the Company's mission to increase access and engage the community.

This summer, Free Shakespeare in the Park will feature the romantic comedy ***MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING*** (May 21-June 23), directed by Tony Award winner **Kenny Leon**; and for the first time in 40 years, the war-torn tragedy ***CORIOLANUS***, directed by Tony Award winner **Daniel Sullivan** (July 16-August 11). The Delacorte summer season will conclude with the seventh year of the acclaimed Public Works initiative with free performances of the Public Works' musical adaptation of ***HERCULES*** (August 31-September 8), with music by **Alan Menken**, lyrics by **David Zippel**, book by **Kristoffer Diaz**, and

directed by **Lear deBessonnet**. Based on the Disney film written by Ron Clements, John Musker, Donald McEnery, Bob Shaw, and Irene Mecchi and directed by Ron Clements and John Musker, **HERCULES** will feature choreography by **Chase Brock**, as well as additional new music by Menken and Zippel for this Public Works production.

“We are delighted to welcome Kenny Leon for his Shakespeare in the Park debut, and Dan Sullivan to the theater he has done so much to define in the past decade. Kenny and Dan are two of our field’s giants, and we are proud they call The Public home,” said **Artistic Director Oskar Eustis**. “*Much Ado* is one of Shakespeare’s greatest comedies, and Kenny’s vision promises to make it as fresh and revelatory as a new play. *Coriolanus*, like *Julius Caesar*, reflects Shakespeare’s profound nervousness about demagoguery and democracy. Rarely performed in the Park, *Coriolanus* promises to be a strong reflection of our own age’s struggle and resistance.”

“We are thrilled to welcome Lear deBessonnet back at the helm of our Public Works initiative for the first time since 2015,” Eustis continued. “Alan Menken is one of the great musical geniuses of our time; it is an honor to welcome him, David Zippel, and Kristoffer Diaz to the Delacorte. Our Public Works community promises to connect this brilliantly conceived story back to the earth from which it sprang: the people. What a grand and unlikely experience this will be!”

“Many generations of our Public Works families have embraced Disney musicals as a shared American canon,” said **Public Works Founder and Hercules Director Lear deBessonnet**. “*Hercules*’ roots in Greek mythology, infused with soulful gospel music, make it a natural extension of Public Works’ radical exploration of humanity through Shakespeare and the classics. We’re excited to see how this Public Works production will uncover the deeper meaning of what it means to be a hero and how true strength is derived, not from the greatness of one person, but the transformative power of community.”

Tony Award winner Kenny Leon directs a bold new take on Shakespeare’s cherished comedy of romantic retribution and miscommunication, **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING**. In this modern production, we find the community of Messina celebrating a break from an ongoing war. But not all is peaceful amid the revelry, as old rivals engage in a battle of wits, unexpected foes plot revenge, and young lovers are caught in a tumultuous courtship – until love proves the ultimate trickster, and undoes them all.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING was first staged at the Delacorte in 1972 and was directed by A. J. Antoon, featuring Sam Waterston as Benedick and Kathleen Widdoes as Beatrice. It was also performed at the Delacorte in 1988, directed by Gerald Freedman, and featuring Kevin Kline as Benedick, Blythe Danner as Beatrice, David Hyde Pierce as Don Juan, and Jerry Stiller as Dogberry. It was staged at the Delacorte in 2004, directed by David Esbjornson, featuring Jimmy Smits as Benedick, Kristen Johnston as Beatrice, Sam Waterston as Leonato, Elisabeth Waterston as Hero, and Jayne Houdyshell as Ursula. In 2013, the comedy was presented as part of The Public’s Mobile Unit, bringing Shakespeare to audiences in the five boroughs who have limited or no access to the arts. The beloved comedy was last seen at the Delacorte in 2014, with a production directed by Jack O’Brien and featuring Lily Rabe as Beatrice, Hamish Linklater as Benedick, and Brian Stokes Mitchell as Don Pedro.

Then, for the first time since 1979, Free Shakespeare in the Park presents **CORIOLANUS**, the Bard’s blistering drama about a general voted into power by a populace hungry for change, and the unraveling that follows. Tony Award winner Daniel Sullivan directs a modern-day version of this riveting epic of democracy and demagoguery. Sullivan last staged *Troilus and Cressida* at the Delacorte Theater in 2016 and his other Park credits include *Cymbeline*, *King Lear*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *As You Like It*, *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

CORIOLANUS has only been staged twice at the Delacorte, first in 1965 with a production directed by Gladys Vaughan and featuring Robert Burr as Caius Marcius Coriolanus, James Earl Jones as Junius Brutus, Staats Cotsworth as Menenius Agrippa, and Marcie Hubert as Valeria. It last appeared at the Delacorte in 1979, directed by Wilford Leach and featuring Morgan Freeman as Caius Marcius Coriolanus, Gloria Foster as Volumnia, Maurice Woods as Menenius Agrippa, and Denzel Washington as Aediles.

The Public Theater's initiative that invites communities across New York to create ambitious works of participatory theater is closing out the summer in truly epic fashion. Public Works will present the glorious story of **HERCULES**, brought to vibrant life by professional actors and community groups from across the city. Directed by Public Works Founder and Resident Director Lear deBessonet, this summer's production, based on the Disney animated film, will feature the film's beloved score, plus additional original songs by the film's composer Alan Menken and lyricist David Zippel, with a new book by Kristoffer Diaz and choreography by Chase Brock. Journey with Hercules in this new stage adaptation that invites New Yorkers from all five boroughs to participate in a joyous musical that celebrates the heroes found in all of us.

HERCULES features scenic design by Dane Laffrey; costume design by Andrea Hood; lighting design by Tyler Micoleau; sound design by Kai Harada and Jessica Paz; wigs, hair, and makeup design by Cookie Jordan; and music supervision and arrangements by Michael Kosarin. **HERCULES** is presented by special arrangement with Disney Theatrical Productions, under the direction of Thomas Schumacher.

PUBLIC WORKS is a national and international initiative of The Public Theater that seeks to engage the people of New York by making them creators and not just spectators. Led by Founder Lear deBessonet and Director of Public Works Laurie Woolery, 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.

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

This year, Public Works is welcoming seven new Public Works National Affiliates, including Long Wharf Theatre (New Haven, CT), Pittsburgh Public Theater (Pittsburgh, PA), Theatre Under The Stars (Houston, TX), Trinity Repertory Company (Providence, RI), Tulsa Performing Arts Center and Trust (Tulsa, OK), Virginia Stage Company (Norfolk, VA), and Williamstown Theatre Festival (Williamstown, MA). These National Affiliates will be joining the Founding Public Works National and International Partners—Dallas Theater Center (Dallas, TX), the National Theatre's Public Acts programme (London and nationally, England), and Seattle Repertory Theatre (Seattle, WA). This network of theaters will be gathering to share practices and help build momentum around community-based theater nationwide. Collectively, they are seeking to put theater at the heart of every community, and community at the heart of every theater.

The three Founding Public Works National Partners are now all in production. This summer, all three founding partners will be presenting productions of *As You Like It*, adapted by Shaina Taub and Laurie Woolery, with music and lyrics by Shaina Taub. These three productions will appear in Dallas, at the Queen's Theatre Hornchurch in London, and Seattle in the months of August and September 2019.

This season, The Public proudly welcomes the return of **The Jerome L. Greene Foundation** and **Bank of America** as season sponsors. The generous support of **The Jerome L. Greene Foundation** and **Bank of America** helps to sustain The Public's mission of inclusion, creating great theater, boldly conceived, and free for all.

"We are thrilled to partner once again with The Public Theater on Free Shakespeare in the Park," said **Christina McInerney, President and CEO of the Jerome L. Greene Foundation**. "All people should have the opportunity to see Shakespeare at the Delacorte Theater, one of New York's most unique treasures. We are truly proud to support Oskar Eustis in his quest to bring the highest quality productions of Shakespeare to all the people of New York."

"Bank of America is pleased to return for the 13th season as sponsor of Shakespeare in the Park, a summer tradition bringing New Yorkers and visitors together for a night of culture under the stars," said **Rena De Sisto, Global Arts & Culture Executive for Bank of America**. "We believe in the power of the arts to help economies thrive, educate and enrich societies, and create greater cultural understanding. That's why

we partner with organizations like The Public Theater and why we're proud our support allows audiences to experience the arts, for free."

The Public Theater's Annual Gala will be celebrated on **Monday, June 3** at the Delacorte Theater. To receive an invitation to The Public Theater's Gala, please call (212) 539-8634 or visit www.publictheater.org.

KENNY LEON (Much Ado About Nothing *Director*) is a Tony Award-winning Broadway and television director. His Broadway credits include *American Son* starring Kerry Washington and Steven Pasquale, the revival of *Children of a Lesser God*, the Tupac musical *Holler If Ya Hear Me*, *A Raisin in the Sun* starring Denzel Washington (Tony Award for Best Direction of a Play and Best Revival of a Play), *The Mountaintop* starring Samuel L. Jackson and Angela Bassett, *Stick Fly* produced by Alicia Keys, August Wilson's *Fences* (which garnered 10 Tony nominations and won three Tony Awards, including Best Revival of a Play), *Gem of the Ocean*, and *Radio Golf*, as well as *A Raisin in the Sun* starring Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, Phylicia Rashad, and Audra McDonald. He also directed *Smart People* for Second Stage. Leon's television work includes "Hairspray Live!" and "The Wiz Live!" on NBC. He is the recipient of the 2016 Mr. Abbott Award for Lifetime Achievement in Directing and the 2010 Award for Excellence in Directing from the Drama League. Leon serves on the board of New York's Public Theater and is Artistic Director of Atlanta's Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company.

DANIEL SULLIVAN (Coriolanus *Director*). His Public Theater credits include *Troilus and Cressida*, *King Lear*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *As You Like It*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *The Merchant of Venice* (also Broadway), *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Stuff Happens*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Broadway credits include *The Nap*; *Saint Joan*; *John Lithgow: Stories By Heart*; *The Little Foxes*; *Sylvia*; *The Country House*; *Snow Geese*; *Orphans*; *Glengarry Glen Ross*; *The Columnist*; *Good People*; *Time Stands Still*; *Accent on Youth*; *The Homecoming*; *Prelude to a Kiss*; *Rabbit Hole*; *After the Night and the Music*; *Julius Caesar*; *Brooklyn Boy*; *Sight Unseen*; *I'm Not Rappaport*; *Morning's at Seven*; *Proof*; *A Moon for the Misbegotten*; *Ah, Wilderness!*; *The Sisters Rosensweig*; *Conversations With My Father*; *The Heidi Chronicles*. Off-Broadway credits include *Lost Lake*, *Intimate Apparel*, *Far East*, *Spinning into Butter*, *Third*, *Dinner With Friends*, *The Substance of Fire*. Sullivan served as the Artistic Director of Seattle Repertory Theatre from 1981-1997, and is a Swanlund Professor of Theatre at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

ALAN MENKEN (Hercules *Music*). Menken's legendary career includes composing scores for stage, film, and television. These include *God Bless You Mr. Rosewater*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Newsies*, *Aladdin*, *Pocahontas*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Hercules*, *Weird Romance*, *King David*, *Home on the Range*, *Enchanted*, *Sister Act*, *Tangled*, *Galavant*, *Leap of Faith*, and *A Bronx Tale*. His honors include 8 Academy Awards, 11 Grammys, 7 Golden Globes, an honorary Emmy, a Tony Award, The Songwriters Hall of Fame's Johnny Mercer Award, and a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

DAVID ZIPPEL (Hercules *Lyrics*). Zippel's lyrics have won him the Tony Award, two Academy Award nominations, two Grammy nominations, and three Golden Globe nominations. He is one of few contemporary lyricists to have achieved success on Broadway, in Hollywood, and in pop music. His musicals include *City of Angels*, *The Goodbye Girl*, *The Woman in White*, *Just So*, *Princesses*, *Going Hollywood*, and *Pamela's First Musical*. His films include Disney's *Hercules*, Disney's *Mulan*, *The Swan Princesses*, *Captain America*, and *The Wedding Planner*. His songs appear on over 25 million CDs sung by Stevie Wonder, Mel Torme, Christina Aguilera, Barbara Cook, Michael Bolton, Ricky Martin, Cleo Laine, Nancy LaMott, Sarah Brightman, Barbra Streisand, and Liza Minnelli.

KRISTOFFER DIAZ (Hercules *Book*) is a playwright, screenwriter, and educator. His play *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama, and has gone on to more than 30 productions nationwide. His other full-length titles include *Welcome to Arroyo's*, *Reggie Hoops*, and *The Unfortunates*. Awards include the Guggenheim, Jerome, Van Lier, NYFA, and Gail Merrifield Papp Fellowships; *New York Times* Outstanding Playwright Award; Lucille Lortel, Equity Jeff, and Obie Awards. As a screenwriter, he has developed original television pilots for HBO and FX, written for the first season

of Netflix's "GLOW," and adapted the musical *Rent* for FOX. Diaz holds a BA from New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study, an MFA from NYU's Department of Dramatic Writing, and an MFA from Brooklyn College's Performing Arts Management program. He teaches playwriting at New York University.

CHASE BROCK (*Hercules Choreographer*). Brock's Public Theater credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *First Daughter Suite*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Tempest*, and *Venice*. His Broadway credits include *Be More Chill*, *Picnic*, and *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*. Internationally, he choreographed Disney's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (U.S., Germany, Japan). His Off-Broadway credits include *The Wildness*, *Gigantic*, *Tamar of the River* (Callaway finalist), and *The Blue Flower* (Lortel nomination). On television, his work has been seen on "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver" and "Late Show with David Letterman." His video game credits include "Dance on Broadway" (Wii, PlayStation) and opera includes *Roméo et Juliette* (The Metropolitan Opera). His dance credits include 31 dances for The Chase Brock Experience, including *The Girl with the Alkaline Eyes*.

LEAR DEBESSONET (*Hercules Director*) is currently Resident Director at The Public Theater and Founder of Public Works. Her credits for The Public include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Public Works musical adaptations of *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Odyssey*, *Miss You Like Hell*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and the Foundry Theater's *Good Person of Szechwan* (for which she won an Obie Award for Direction, a Lortel Award for Best Revival, a Drama Desk nomination, and a Lilly Award). She is also now Resident Director for Encores! at City Center, where she previously directed *Big River* and *Pump Boys and Dinettes*. She received TCG's Peter Zeisler Award and the Doris Duke Impact Award.

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

ABOUT BANK OF AMERICA ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE:

At Bank of America, our focus on environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors is critical to fulfilling our purpose of helping make people's financial lives better. Our commitment to growing our business responsibly is embedded in every aspect of our company. It is demonstrated in the inclusive and supportive workplace we create for our employees, the responsible products and services we offer our customers, and the impact we make around the world in helping local economies thrive. An important part of this work is forming strong partnerships with nonprofits and advocate groups, such as community and environmental organizations, in order to bring together our collective networks and expertise to achieve greater impact. Learn more at www.bankofamerica.com/about, and connect with us on Twitter (@BofA_News).

ABOUT THE JEROME L. GREENE FOUNDATION:

For over four decades the Jerome L. Greene Foundation has supported leading organizations that advance the arts, education, medicine, and social justice. Founded by Jerome L. Greene to improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers, the Foundation recognizes the power of innovative thinking by working with leaders who are committed to positive social change. In the arts, the Foundation primarily invests in organizations that provide free or affordable access to live performance through ticket subsidy programs, helping further the transformative experience the arts provide.

Lead support for Free Shakespeare in the Park provided by Bank of America and The Jerome L. Greene Foundation.

Lead support for **PUBLIC WORKS** is provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and The Tow Foundation.

The LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust provides leadership support for The Public Theater's year-round activities.

#