

# THE PUBLIC.

**FOR IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE**

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PHOTOS:

[THE HARDER THEY COME IN REHEARSAL  
CAST & CREATIVE HEADSHOTS](#)

## **THE PUBLIC THEATER BEGINS PREVIEWS FOR WORLD PREMIERE MUSICAL *THE HARDER THEY COME***

**Book by Suzan-Lori Parks**

**Including Songs by Jimmy Cliff**

**Additional New Songs by Suzan-Lori Parks**

**Based upon the film, produced and directed by Perry Henzell and co-written  
with Trevor Rhone**

**Music Supervision, Orchestrations, and Arrangements by Kenny Seymour**

**Choreography by Edgar Godineaux**

**Co-Directed by Sergio Trujillo**

**Directed by Tony Taccone**

**50th Anniversary Exhibition of Jamaican Artists Inspired By Original Film  
Featured at The Public Theater Beginning February 16**

**Performances Begin Thursday, February 16 and Run Through Sunday, March 26;  
Official Press Opening on Wednesday, March 15**

February 2, 2023 – The Public Theater (Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director and Patrick Willingham, Executive Director) begins performances for the world premiere of **THE HARDER THEY COME**, a musical adaptation of the classic Jamaican film produced and directed by **Perry Henzell** and co-written with **Trevor Rhone**, with a Joseph Papp Free Performance on Thursday, February 16. Fifty years after the film premiered in New York City, the musical features a book and additional new songs by Pulitzer Prize winner **Suzan-Lori Parks**, songs by legendary musician **Jimmy Cliff**, music supervision, orchestrations, and arrangements by **Kenny Seymour**, choreography by **Edgar Godineaux**, co-direction by Tony Award winner **Sergio Trujillo**, and direction by Tony Award nominee **Tony Taccone**. **THE HARDER THEY COME** will continue performances in the Newman Theater through Sunday, March 26, with an official opening on Wednesday, March 15.

Beginning on Thursday, February 16, theatergoers will be able to visit **Wheel and Come Again: The 50th Anniversary Art Exhibition of *The Harder They Come*** on The Public Theater's Levin Mezzanine, an exhibition of art inspired by the original film. For the film's 50th Anniversary, the Henzell family commissioned Jamaican visual artists and poets, based on the island and overseas, to create new pieces celebrating and reinterpreting the film. The exhibition of more than 50 pieces was originally mounted at Perry Henzell's Kingston home and studio, where much of the film was shot. To honor the film's

significance and influence on Jamaican culture, select pieces will be on display at The Public Theater for all to visit through the show's run.

Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and The Public's Writer-in-Residence, **Suzan-Lori Parks**, brings to The Public a new musical adaptation of the 1972 movie, **THE HARDER THEY COME**. The breakthrough film, produced and directed by **Perry Henzell** and co-written with **Trevor Rhone**, tells the story of Ivan, a young singer who arrives in Kingston, Jamaica, eager to become a star. After falling in love and cutting a record deal with a powerful music mogul, Ivan soon learns that the game is rigged, and as he becomes increasingly defiant, he finds himself in a battle that threatens not only his life, but the very fabric of Jamaican society. Featuring Grammy Award winner **Jimmy Cliff's** hits, "You Can Get It If You Really Want" and "Many Rivers to Cross," former Artistic Director of Berkeley Repertory Theatre **Tony Taccone** directs this new musical, with co-direction by Tony Award winner **Sergio Trujillo** and choreography by **Edgar Godineaux**.

The complete cast of **THE HARDER THEY COME** includes **Jeannette Bayardelle** (*Daisy*), **Shawn Bowers** (*Ensemble*), **J. Bernard Calloway** (*Preacher*), **Andrew Clarke** (*Lyle*), **Eean Sherrod Cochran** (*Understudy*), **Tyla Collier** (*Understudy*), **Jamal Christopher Douglas** (*Ensemble*), **Tiffany Francès** (*Understudy*), **Garfield Hammonds** (*Understudy*), **Dana Marie Ingraham** (*Ensemble*), **Dominique Johnson** (*Jose*), **Chelsea-Ann Jones** (*Ensemble*), **Natey Jones** (*Ivan*), **Dudney Joseph Jr** (*Ray*), **Dwight Xaveir Leslie** (*Understudy*), **Morgan McGhee** (*Ensemble*), **Meecah** (*Elsa*), **Jacob Ming-Trent** (*Pedro*), **Alysha Morgan** (*Ensemble*), **Ken Robinson** (*Hilton*), **Houso Semon** (*Ensemble*), **Denver Andre Taylor** (*Understudy*), **Sir Brock Warren** (*Ensemble*), **Carla Woods** (*Understudy*), and **Christopher Henry Young** (*Ensemble*).

**THE HARDER THEY COME** features scenic design by Clint Ramos & Diggle; costume design by Emilio Sosa; lighting design by Japhy Weideman; sound design by Walter Trarbach; projection design by Hana S. Kim; hair, wig and makeup design by Earon Chew Nealey; prop management by Claire M. Kavanah; fight and intimacy direction by Rocio Mendez; dialect coaching by Dwight Bacquie; music contracting by Kristy Norter; and music direction by John Bronston. Jeffrey Rodriguez serves as production stage manager and Amanda Michaels and Alex Murphy serve as stage managers.

The Public's 55th anniversary season at Astor Place continues in 2023. Following **THE HARDER THEY COME**, acclaimed writer and performer Ryan J. Haddad makes his off-Broadway playwriting debut with the hilarious and audacious **DARK DISABLED STORIES**, a world premiere play in the Shiva Theater about the encounters he has while navigating a city (and world) not built for his walker and cerebral palsy. Produced by The Bushwick Starr and presented at The Public, Haddad and director Jordan Fein center the narratives of disabled individuals, who have too frequently been left out of the American theater canon. In April, Suzan-Lori Parks' theatrical concert **PLAYS FOR THE PLAGUE YEAR** will return to Joe's Pub after the production was halted last fall due to COVID-19. Working in collaboration with Niegel Smith as director, Parks' groundbreaking new work is brimming with humanity, bears witness to what we've experienced, and offers inspiration as we look ahead. Also beginning previews in April will be Erika Dickerson-Despenza's **SHADOW/LAND**, the first play in her 10-play Katrina Cycle, making its live premiere after a successful audio production in spring 2021. Directed by Candis C. Jones, the world premiere play in the LuEsther Hall follows a mother and daughter as they face questions of legacy against the arrival of Hurricane Katrina. At the end of spring, The Public's Mobile Unit embarks on a new tour of the five boroughs with a bilingual musical adaptation of Shakespeare's **THE COMEDY OF ERRORS**, conceived by director Rebecca Martinez and composer Julián Mesri, that embraces music from all over Latin America in this tale of separation and joyous reunion.

In keeping with guidance from city, state, and federal officials, proof of vaccination against COVID-19 and the use of face masks are no longer mandated for entry into The Public's theaters, restaurant, or the facility. The use of face masks is encouraged at all performances, but will only be required at Saturday and Sunday matinee performances, Tuesday evening performances, as well as Joseph Papp Free Performances.

These mask required performances are to accommodate those who are immunocompromised or uncomfortable in an unmasked environment. Learn more at [Safe At The Public](#).

The Library at The Public serves food and drink Tuesday through Sunday, beginning at 5:00 p.m. and closing at midnight. The Library is closed on Mondays. For more information, visit [publictheater.org](http://publictheater.org).

## **BIOS:**

**SUZAN-LORI PARKS** (*Book*) is the first African-American woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize in Drama. Other honors include the MacArthur Genius Grant, and the Gish Prize for Excellence in the Arts, and she was recently inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame. In addition to the 20th Anniversary Broadway revival of *Topdog/Underdog*, Parks' most recent world premieres include *Plays for the Plague Year* (Public Theater) and *Sally & Tom* (Guthrie Theater). Her other works includes *The Gershwin's Porgy and Bess* (Tony Award for Best Revival), *365 Days/365 Plays*, *Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)*, *Fucking A*, *The Book of Grace*, *Unchain My Heart: The Ray Charles Musical*, and *In the Blood*. Parks also works extensively in film and television, most recently as the screenwriter for *The United States vs. Billie Holiday* and *Genius: Aretha* as creator, writer, and showrunner. Her novel *Getting Mother's Body* is published by Random House, and in her spare time, she writes songs and fronts her band Sula & The Noise. Parks is a former writing student of James Baldwin.

**KENNY SEYMOUR** (*Music Supervisor, Orchestrator, and Arranger*) is the music supervisor and arranger of the Tony Award-winning musical *Ain't Too Proud* (Broadway, National Tour, and London production). His other credits include Tony Award-winning Best Musical *Memphis* (music director), *Amazing Grace* (orchestrator), *MARLEY: A Premiere Musical* (music supervisor/arranger/orchestrator), Carnegie Hall's *A Time Like This: Music For Change* (music director/supervisor/orchestrator), *Half-Time: The Musical* (dance arranger/electronic music producer), *The Tallest Tree In The Forest* (music director/arranger/incidental music), and *Big Maybelle: Soul of the Blues* (supervisor/orchestrator). As a composer, Seymour has had his work performed by the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, received a Global Music Award for Best Original Score of the independent film *Talking with the Taxman About Poetry*, and composed and orchestrated music for the popular international children's language program "English Egg." Seymour has arranged and orchestrated music for shows on FOX, BET, and NBC, as well as the Inaugural Ball for President Barack Obama. He has performed on stages around the world, from the legendary Apollo Theatre and Carnegie Hall to the Montreux Jazz Festival, working with a wide variety of the industry's top recording artists. Seymour attended LaGuardia High School, Manhattan School of Music, and Berklee College of Music.

**EDGAR GODINEAUX** (*Choreographer*). Awards include Barrymore Award for Outstanding Choreography/Movement (*Lights Out: Nat "King" Cole*) and NAACP nomination for Best Director/Choreography for Larger Theatre in LA (*Memphis the Musical*). Current projects include *Personality: The Lloyd Price Musical* with director Sheldon Epps. Godineaux has a collaborative relationship with Sergio Trujillo and is Associate Choreographer for *Ain't Too Proud* (Tony: Best Choreography), *Memphis the Musical* (Tony: Best Musical, Olivier: Best Choreography), *Leap of Faith*, and *Flashdance the Musical*. As a dance performer, Godineaux toured with Michael Jackson, Mariah Carey, Karyn White, and Diana Ross. He has performed on "Dancing With The Stars," "Sunday Night at the Palladium," the Oscars, AMAs, Grammy Awards, MTV Awards, Emmys, and Motown 30th Anniversary (associate choreographer). Broadway performance credits include *Aida*, *Swing!*, *The Pajama Game*, *Dance of the Vampires*, and *Merrily We Roll Along* (Kennedy Center). TV and film credits as a performer include "Law & Order" (CI & SVU), "Glee," and "How I Met Your Mother," and as a choreographer include "Dancing with the Stars," "SYTYCD Canada," "Awkwafina is Nora from Queens," *Chicago*, *Jersey Boys* (associate choreographer), and *The Five Heartbeats* (associate choreographer). He was associate choreographer to Hinton Battle for *Idlwild*, *Boldin*, and *The Great Observer*.

**SERGIO TRUJILLO** (*Co-Director*) is the recipient of a Tony Award for *Ain't Too Proud – The Life and Times of The Temptations* and an Olivier Award for *Memphis the Musical*. Broadway credits include *Ain't Too*

*Proud* (Tony and NAACP Award, Outer Critics Circle and Chita Rivera nominations), *On Your Feet!* (Tony Award nominee, Outer Critics Circle and Astaire Awards), *Memphis the Musical* (Olivier and OCC Award, Drama Desk and Astaire Award nominations), *Jersey Boys* (Olivier, Drama Desk, OCC, Greenroom, and Dora nominations), *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical* (Chita Rivera and NAACP Award), *A Bronx Tale* (Chita Rivera Award nomination), *The Addams Family*, *Next to Normal*, *Hands on a Hardbody* (Drama Desk nomination), *Leap of Faith* (Drama Desk nomination), *Guys and Dolls* (Astaire Awards nomination), and *All Shook Up*. Work as a director/choreographer includes Cirque Du Soleil's *Paramour* (Stage Entertainment), *Arrabal* (A.R.T., Elliot Norton Award), *Gloria Estefan on Broadway* (Minskoff Theatre), and *Flashdance The Musical* (National Tour). International credits include *Disney's Tarzan* (Stage Entertainment), *Peggy Sue Got Married* (West End), and *West Side Story* (Stratford Festival). TV credits include "Annie Live!" for NBC (Emmy nominee), Kennedy Center Honors, 2021 Tony Awards, and "Christmas in Rockefeller Center" (Emmy nominee).

**TONY TACCONE** (*Director*) is a freelance director and writer. He most recently directed *Kiss My Aztec*, a new musical he co-wrote with John Leguizamo. In 2019, he ended his 22-year tenure as Artistic Director of Berkeley Rep, during which time the theater presented more than 70 world, American, and West Coast premieres and sent 24 shows to New York, two to London, and one to Hong Kong. He has directed new work by Tony Kushner, Julia Cho, John Leguizamo, Lemony Snicket, Culture Clash, David Edgar, Danny Hoch, and Itamar Moses. Two of his shows, *Continental Divide* and *Tiny Kushner*, transferred to London, and three have landed on Broadway: *Bridge & Tunnel*, *Wishful Drinking*, and *Latin History for Morons*. Prior to working at Berkeley Rep, Taccone served as artistic director of Eureka Theatre, where he commissioned Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* and co-directed its world premiere. His regional credits include Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arena Stage, Center Theatre Group, the Guthrie Theater, the La Jolla Playhouse, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and The Public Theater.

### **ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER:**

**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 Lab, 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 60 Tony Awards, 184 Obie Awards, 56 Drama Desk Awards, 59 Lortel Awards, 34 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, 62 AUDELCO Awards, 6 Antonyo Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. [publictheater.org](http://publictheater.org)

The Public Theater stands in honor of the first inhabitants and our ancestors. We acknowledge the land on which The Public and its theaters stand—the original homeland of the Lenape people. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory. We honor the generations of stewards and we pay our respects to the many diverse indigenous peoples still connected to this land.

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

Additional support for **THE HARDER THEY COME** provided by **American Friends of Jamaica, baker & Dr. Nadine Chang**, and **Cathy Dantchik**.

### **TICKET INFORMATION**

**THE HARDER THEY COME** begins performances in The Public's Newman Theater with a Joseph Papp Free Performance on Thursday, February 16 and will run through Sunday, March 26, with an official press opening on Wednesday, March 15.

Public Theater Partner, Supporter, and full-price single tickets are available now and can be accessed by visiting [publictheater.org](http://publictheater.org), calling **212.967.7555**, or in person at the Taub Box Office at The Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street.

The Public's Joseph Papp Free Performance initiative will offer free tickets to the performance on Thursday, February 16 through TodayTix. The Lottery will open for entries on Thursday, February 9 and will close at 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 15. Winners will be notified by email and push notification anytime from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and if selected, winners will have one 1 hour to claim their tickets.

The performance schedule is Tuesday through Sunday at 8:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday at 2:00 p.m. (*There will be no 2:00 p.m. performances on Saturday, February 18 and Sunday, February 19.*)

The **Open Captioned** performance will be at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 18. The **Audio Described** performance will be at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 25.

The full performance calendar can be found at [publictheater.org](http://publictheater.org).

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