

**THE PUBLIC THEATER
ANNOUNCES
CASTING FOR
2019 FREE SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK
PRODUCTION OF
*MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING***

Directed by Kenny Leon
May 21-June 23

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

April 8, 2019 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced casting today for the 2019 Free Shakespeare in the Park production of ***MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING*** beginning Tuesday, May 21 at the Delacorte Theater, continuing a 57-year tradition of free theater in Central Park. Directed by Tony Award winner Kenny Leon, the beloved comedy will officially open on Tuesday, June 11 and will run through Sunday, June 23.

The cast of ***MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING*** will include **Jamar Brathwaite** (*Ensemble*), **Danielle Brooks** (*Beatrice*), **Grantham Coleman** (*Benedick*), **Chuck Cooper** (*Leonato*), **Javen Crosby** (*Ensemble*), **Denzel Fields** (*Ensemble*), **Jeremie Harris** (*Claudio*), **Taylor Harris** (*Ensemble*), **Erik Laray Harvey** (*Antonio/Verges*), **Kai Heath** (*Ensemble*), **Daniel Croix Henderson** (*Balthasar*), **Tyrone Mitchell Henderson** (*Friar Francis/Sexton*), **Tiffany Denise Hobbs** (*Ursula*), **Lateefah Holder** (*Dogberry*), **LaWanda Hopkins** (*Dancer*), **Billy Eugene Jones** (*Don Pedro*), **Margaret Odette** (*Hero*), **Hubert Point-Du Jour** (*Don John*), **Jaime Lincoln Smith** (*Borachio*), **Jazmine Stewart** (*Ensemble*), **Khiry Walker** (*Conrade/Ensemble*), **Olivia Washington** (*Margaret*), and **Latra A. Wilson** (*Dancer*).

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 will feature scenic design by Beowulf Boritt; costume design by Emilio Sosa; lighting design by Peter Kaczorowski; sound design by Jessica Paz; wigs, hair, and make-up design by Mia Neal; and choreography by Camille A. Brown.

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.

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 season, The Public proudly welcomes the return of **Jerome L. Greene Foundation** and **Bank of America** as season sponsors. The generous support of **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.

The Public Theater's Annual Gala, **WOMEN OF THE PUBLIC** 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.

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 JEROME L. GREENE FOUNDATION:

For over four decades 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.

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).

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

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

FREE TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets to The Public Theater's Free Shakespeare in the Park are distributed in a number of ways. On the day of each public performance, free tickets may be acquired in person at The Delacorte Theater, through a digital lottery via the TodayTix website or mobile app, in person at a borough distribution site, and via an in person lottery in the lobby of The Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street. All tickets are subject to availability. A performance calendar and complete ticket distribution details can be found at **PublicTheater.org**.

A limited number of tickets are also available via advance reservation by making a contribution in support of Free Shakespeare in the Park. To learn more, or to make a contribution, call **212.967.7555**, or visit **PublicTheater.org**.

The Delacorte Theater in Central Park is accessible by entering at 81st Street and Central Park West or at 79th Street and Fifth Avenue.

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