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**THE PUBLIC THEATER
BEGINS PERFORMANCES FOR
WORLD PREMIERE OF
COAL COUNTRY
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18**

**Written by Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen
Original Music by Steve Earle
Directed by Jessica Blank**

Joseph Papp Free Preview on Tuesday, February 18

February 11, 2020 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) will begin performances for the world premiere of the new play **COAL COUNTRY**, written by **Jessica Blank** and **Erik Jensen** with original music by **Steve Earle**, on Tuesday, February 18 with a Joseph Papp Free Preview performance in the Anspacher Theater. Directed by Jessica Blank, this riveting new work will run through Sunday, March 29, with an official press opening on Tuesday, March 3.

The complete cast of **COAL COUNTRY** features **Mary Bacon** (*Patti*), **Amelia Campbell** (*Mindi*), **Michael Gaston** (*Goose*), **Ezra Knight** (*Roosevelt*), **Thomas Kopache** (*Gary*), **Michael Laurence** (*Tommy*), **Deirdre Madigan** (*Judy*), and **Melinda Tanner** (*Judge Berger*). **Steve Earle** joins the cast onstage to perform his original music.

In 2010, the Upper Big Branch mine explosion killed 29 men, and tore a hole in the lives of countless others. In this riveting, emotionally stunning new work based on first-person accounts by survivors and family members, Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen, award-winning writers of *The Exonerated*, and three-time Grammy Award-winning country/folk legend Steve Earle dig deep into the lives and loss of the most deadly mining disaster in recent U.S. history. Jessica Blank directs this haunting world premiere that gives voice to those yet unheard and shines a piercing light on the deadly forces of greed and the enduring power of love.

Continuing The Public's mission to make great theater accessible to all, The Public's Joseph Papp Free Preview initiative continues this spring; free tickets to the performance on Tuesday, February 18 will be available beginning Wednesday, February 12 via TodayTix mobile lottery, and on Tuesday, February 18 via the lottery in the lobby of The Public Theater at Astor Place, with entries starting at 11:00 a.m. and winners drawn at 12:00 p.m. (Noon).

COAL COUNTRY features scenic design by Richard Hoover, costume design by Jessica Jahn, lighting design by David Lander, sound design by Darron L West, music direction by Steve Earle, and movement direction by Adesola Osakalumi.

JESSICA BLANK AND ERIK JENSEN (*Director and Playwrights*) are writers, actors, and directors. They are authors of *The Exonerated* (Lortel, Outer Critics Circle, Drama Desk, Ovation, Fringe First, Herald Angel, and The American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Awards) and its award-winning TV movie adaptation starring Susan Sarandon and Danny Glover, as well as *Aftermath* (NYTW; NYT Critics' Pick, international tour, two Drama League nominations). Their play *How to Be a Rock Critic* (based on the writings of Lester Bangs) ran at the Kirk Douglas, South Coast Rep, ArtsEmerson, Steppenwolf, and Under the Radar at The Public Theater, with Jensen starring and Blank directing. They are currently developing *How to Be a Rock Critic* for feature film with Likely Story; their first film, *Almost Home*, was released in 2019. They have developed and written TV for Gaumont, Fox TV Studios, 20th Century TV, Avenue Pictures, Sunswept Entertainment, Virgin Produced, and Radical Media. Jensen's acting credits include arcs on "The Walking Dead," "Mindhunter," and "Mr. Robot"; leads in the upcoming ABC series "For Life" and pilots "Second Sight," "The Frontier," and "Virtuality"; baseball legend Thurman Munson in "The Bronx Is Burning," and numerous appearances including "The Americans," "Modern Love," "Turn," "Elementary," "The Blacklist," "Chicago PD," and more. Film includes *Black Knight*, *The Love Letter*, and over two dozen indies. His theater credits include the Pulitzer Prize-winning production of *Disgraced* (LCT3), *The Good Negro* (The Public), Arthur Kopit's *Y2K* and Terrance McNally's *Corpus Christi* (MTC), and his critically acclaimed solo performance as Lester Bangs in *How to Be a Rock Critic*. As an actor, Blank's TV credits include "For Life," "High Maintenance," "Blue Bloods," "Elementary," "The Following," "The Mentalist," "Bored To Death," "Rescue Me," "Law & Order: CI," "The Bronx Is Burning," NBC pilot "Shelter," and over a dozen films. Jensen and Blank are married and live in Brooklyn with their daughter Sadie.

STEVE EARLE (*Original Music*) is one of the most acclaimed singer-songwriters of his generation. A protégé of legendary songwriters Townes Van Zandt and Guy Clark, he quickly became a master storyteller in his own right, with his songs being recorded by Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Joan Baez, Emmylou Harris, The Pretenders, and countless others. 1986 saw the release of his debut record, *Guitar Town*, which shot to number one on the country charts. What followed was a varied array of releases including the Grammy Award-winning albums *The Revolution Starts...Now* (2004), *Washington Square Serenade* (2007), and *Townes* (2009). A true Renaissance man, Earle has become a novelist, a film, TV, and stage actor, playwright, record producer, and radio host. In 2018, he appeared in the Off-Broadway play *Samara*, for which he also wrote the score that *The New York Times* called "exquisitely subliminal." 2019 saw the release of *GUY*, his highly anticipated 19th studio album *The New Yorker* calls a "winsome tribute" to his mentor, the legendary Guy Clark.

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 and *Girl From the North Country*. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 59 Tony Awards, 178 Obie Awards, 53 Drama Desk Awards, 56 Lortel Awards, 34 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. publictheater.org

TICKET INFORMATION

COAL COUNTRY begins performances in The Public's Anspacher Theater with a Joseph Papp Free

Preview performance on Tuesday, February 18. The world premiere play will run through Sunday, March 29, with an official press opening on Tuesday, March 3.

Public Theater Partner, Supporter, and full-price single tickets can be accessed by calling **(212) 967-7555**, visiting publictheater.org, or in person at the Taub Box Office at The Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street.

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The performance schedule is Tuesday through Friday at 8:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. (*There is no 2:00 p.m. performance on Saturday, February 22. The performance on Wednesday, March 18 is at 7:30 p.m.*)

The **Open Captioned** performance will be at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 7. The **Audio Described** performance will be at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 14. The **American Sign Language Interpreted** performance will be at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 21.

The Library at The Public is open nightly for food and drink, beginning at 5:30 p.m., and Joe's Pub at The Public continues to offer some of the best music in the city. For more information, visit publictheater.org.

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