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**THE PUBLIC THEATER  
ANNOUNCES  
LIVE-STREAMED WORLD PREMIERE PLAY  
*THE LINE*  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 8 at 7:30 P.M.**

**Written by Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen**  
**Directed by Jessica Blank**

**Complete Cast Features Santino Fontana, Arjun Gupta,  
John Ortiz, Alison Pill, Nicholas Pinnock,  
Jamey Sheridan, and Lorraine Toussaint**

June 30, 2020 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced the world premiere of *THE LINE*, written by Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen and directed by Blank, to debut on **Wednesday, July 8 at 7:30 p.m. ET**. The live-streamed play, bringing first-person stories of New York City’s first responders during the COVID-19 pandemic to the digital stage, will be available to watch for free via both YouTube and The Public’s website. Commissioned by The Public Theater and written specifically for the digital sphere, this new play will premiere on July 8, and remain available on demand until August 4 at 11:59 p.m. ET.

“In spring 2020, we conducted anonymous interviews with NYC frontline medical workers battling the COVID-19 virus,” said *THE LINE* creators **Jessica Blank** and **Erik Jensen**. “Through these interviews, we began to see *care* as a radical response to institutionalized violence and the systems that perpetuate it. Created from quarantine in ‘rapid response’ to this national emergency, *THE LINE* presents a fundamental redefinition of what it means to protect and serve, examining the fault lines in our system through the words of the brave people who show up every day to care for us all.”

*THE LINE* is a new play by Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen created in the award-winning documentary style that brought you *The Exonerated*, *Aftermath*, and *Coal Country*. Crafted from firsthand interviews with New York City medical first responders during the COVID-19 pandemic, *THE LINE* cuts through the media and political noise to reveal the lived experiences of frontline medical workers in New York and their battle to save lives in a system built to serve the bottom line.

The company of *THE LINE* features **Santino Fontana** (*David*), **Arjun Gupta** (*Vikram*), **John Ortiz** (*Oscar*), **Alison Pill** (*Jennifer*), **Nicholas Pinnock** (*Dwight*), **Jamey Sheridan** (*Ed*), and **Lorraine Toussaint** (*Sharon*). *THE LINE* features original music composition by **Aimee Mann** and **Jonathan Coulton** produced by **Michael Penn**, and **Janelle Caso** will serve as production stage manager.

“We owe our lives to the frontline workers who are fighting through the COVID-19 crisis, and they have an astounding story to tell—one that demands we listen,” said Public Theater Artistic Director **Oskar Eustis**. “The pandemic has exposed deep fissures in our country, and these brave women and men are throwing light into those dark places. Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen are masters of the docu-drama form, and in **THE LINE** they are demonstrating an artistic rapid response that is impressive and vital.”

**JESSICA BLANK** (*Playwright/Director*) and **ERIK JENSEN** (*Playwright*) are writers, actors, and directors. They are authors of *Coal Country* (NYT Critic’s Pick, Edgerton Foundation New Play Award, two Drama Desk nominations); *The Exonerated* (Lortel, Outer Critics Circle, Drama Desk, Ovation, Fringe First, and Herald Angel Awards) and its award-winning TV movie adaptation starring Susan Sarandon, Danny Glover, and Delroy Lindo; as well as *Aftermath* (NYTW; NYT Critic’s Pick, 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 UTR at The Public, with Jensen starring as Lester Bangs, and Blank directing. They are developing this play 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, Virgin Produced, and Radical Media. Jensen’s acting credits include arcs on “The Walking Dead,” “Mindhunter,” and “Mr. Robot”; leads in “For Life” (ABC, season 2 renewal) and pilots “Second Sight,” “The Frontier,” and “Virtuality”; he played baseball’s Thurman Munson in “The Bronx is Burning.” Other appearances include “The Americans,” “Turn,” “High Maintenance,” “Elementary,” “The Blacklist,” “Chicago PD.” Film includes *Black Knight*, *The Love Letter*, and over two dozen indies. Theater: Pulitzer-Prize winning production of *Disgraced* (Lincoln Center); *The Good Negro* (The Public); *Y2K*, *Corpus Christi* (MTC); etc. 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 and Order: CSI,” “The Bronx is Burning,” NBC pilot “Shelter,” and over a dozen films. Blank teaches at the Juilliard School. Blank and Jensen are married and live in Brooklyn with their daughter Sadie.

## **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, 55 Drama Desk Awards, 58 Lortel Awards, 34 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics’ Circle Awards, 6 Antonyo Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. [publictheater.org](http://publictheater.org)

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