

THE PUBLIC THEATER

Presents

OSKAR EUSTIS
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

PATRICK WILLINGHAM
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**DEEP
HISTORY**

Written and Performed by **DAVID FINNIGAN**

Video Design **HAYLEY EGAN**

Music **REUBEN INGALL**

Direction **ANNETTE MEES**

Production Stage Manager **BUZZ COHEN**

Line Producer **CITLALI PIZARRO**

Company Manager **HEATHER FICHTHORN**

Production Manager **ALIYAH SALL**

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David Finnigan

Performer DAVID FINNIGAN

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A NOTE

FROM OSKAR EUSTIS

Dear Friends,

In early 2023 I was lucky enough to make an extended trip to Sydney, Australia, where I worked on a book and tried resolutely to stay out of the theater. The work on the book went well; staying out of the theater? Not so much.

One product of that journey you've already seen: Belvoir St Theatre's magnificent production of *COUNTING AND CRACKING*, which we presented in September at NYU Skirball down the street. That huge, multi-generational, internationally cast production about the Sri Lankan civil war and its aftermath was a glorious example of the scale and ambition that theater is capable of. I've compared it to *Dr. Zhivago* or *War and Peace*—its scale and accomplishment made the comparison apt.

On the other end of the scale, welcome to David Finnigan's *DEEP HISTORY*. **This is theater as portable and light as is imaginable, as if David was determined to model how to make a big impact with a light carbon footprint.** Eamon Flack, the Artistic Director of Belvoir St Theatre (and the director and associate writer of *COUNTING AND CRACKING*), introduced me to David and his work when I was in Sydney, and I was immediately captivated by his extraordinary knowledge of climate science, his grace and wit, and his passionate artistry.

One of the most striking things about Australia to me was how the reality of climate change was not politicized in the way it has been here: everyone agreed that the climate is changing drastically, that human beings are causing the change, and that it is an existential emergency. Of course, there are fierce disputes about how to handle the crisis, but it was an extraordinary relief to be in a country where reality, and the science that explains that reality, were universally accepted. **It brought home to me how profoundly provincial our own national dialogue about climate is, how distorted our political landscape has become.**

This is true in the theater, as well. With the exception of The Civilians' show *The Great Immensity* in 2014, we at The Public have been unable to find theatrical voices that can speak to the greatest issue facing humanity. In Australia, by contrast, almost every theater had included plays focusing on climate as part of their season when I was there. Some of them, like *DEEP HISTORY*, have done amazing jobs of turning this most intractable of subjects into human drama.

As I write, we are working on a very large commission with David about the climate, a commission that is scheduled to come to fruition in 2028, when the International Program on Climate Change (IPCC) is scheduled to release its next assessment of the state of the climate. Watching *DEEP HISTORY*, I think you'll understand why we think David is the artist to build this show.

Welcome to *DEEP HISTORY*.



OSKAR EUSTIS
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, THE PUBLIC THEATER

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WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

DAVID FINNIGAN (*Playwright and Performer*) is a playwright and game designer from Ngunnawal country in Australia. He works with climate and earth scientists to create theatre and games about complex systems and planetary transformation. In 2023, Finnigan's play *Scenes From the Climate Era* premiered at the Belvoir St Theatre in Sydney. His 2022 solo show *Deep History* was awarded a Scotsman Fringe First award. Finnigan was awarded Melbourne's Green Room Award for Best Writing for *Are You Ready to Take the Law Into Your Own Hands* in 2021. His playscript *Kill Climate Deniers* was awarded the 2017 Griffin Award. His play *44 Sex Acts in One Week* was nominated for the Soho Theatre's Verity Bargate Award, the Patrick White Award and the Theatre Uncut Political Playwriting Award. Finnigan has worked with scientists from institutions including University College London, the Stockholm Resilience Centre, the Australian Academy of Science, the Wellcome Trust and Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

HAYLEY EGAN (*Video Design*) is a video designer working across theatre, opera and ballet. Recent work: *Luna* (Birmingham Royal Ballet); *London Tide, The Boy With Two Hearts* (National Theatre); *Cinders!*, *The Scandal at Mayerling* (Scottish Ballet); *Boy Parts* (Soho Theatre); *The Sound of Music, Mom, How Did You Meet the Beatles?* (Chichester); *Tomorrow Gala* (The Old Vic); *Pijin* (Theatr Iolo); *Ruination* (Lost Dog, Royal Ballet); *Everyday* (Deafinitely Theatre); *Triple Bill: WITCH* (Royal Academy of Music); *The Child in the Snow* (Wilton's Music Hall); *The Language of Kindness*

(Wayward Productions); *I'll Take You to Mrs Cole!* (Complicité); *Dead Man Walking, Fidellio, The Consul* (Welsh National Opera). Associate credits: *Mnemonic* (Complicité); *Uncanny* (tour); *People, Places and Things* (West End); *Nixon in China* (Scottish Opera); *The Handmaid's Tale* (Royal Danish Opera); *Coppélia* (Scottish Ballet); *A Tale of Two Cities* (Lost Dog); *Litvinenko* (Grange Park Opera); *Don Giovanni* (Greek National Opera); *Orlando* (Vienna State Opera); *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* (Teatro alla Scala); *Idomeneo* (Teatro Real); *Grief Is the Thing With Feathers* (Wayward Productions). hayleyegan.co.uk

REUBEN INGALL (*Music*) is a musician from Ngunnawal country in Australia. He started making noise in high school, then did digital arts at university. He has worked on music for installations, theatre, e-publications, film and dance. Each release makes his discography less coherent, mostly "experimental" areas using guitar and computer, dance music/mashups/remixes and no-input mixing. He has hosted a few years of monthly gig nights, and a decade of weekly radio shows.

ANNETTE MEES (*Director*) is an award-winning theatre director, artist and dramaturg. She works with theatre-makers and interdisciplinary teams to create theatrical work that defies definitions, undertake interdisciplinary R&D and spark new thinking. She is the artistic director of Audience Labs, an artist-led lab making interdisciplinary theatre, art and publications that imagine sustainable, just and creative visions of the future. She is currently developing projects with the National Arts

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WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

Centre, NITE, Substrakt, European Cultural Foundation, Screen Industry Research & Training Centre, Southbank Centre and Agora Now. She is the chair of FutureEverything, the first U.K. arts organization to put nature on its board, and a co-host of global conversation on The Future of Culture supported by Arup and Therme. Previously she was a creative fellow for *Wired* magazine and The Space, and guest artistic director of the Danish Inspiration Lab. She started her career as one of the founding co-artistic directors of Coney, an internationally renowned immersive theatre company. She has worked with Google Creative Lab, National Theatre of Wales, Tate Britain, Wayne McGregor, Kensington Palace, Magic Leap, European Space Agency, Unity Theatre, MAC, U.K. Parliament, O1SJ San Jose Biennial, British Council, NESTA, Battersea Arts Centre, The National Gallery, Arnolfini and many more. Her work has received awards across different genres from the Writers' Guild of Great Britain to the International VR awards.

BUZZ COHEN (*Production Stage Manager*). The Public: 79 productions since 1986, including *Plays for the Plague Year*, *A Bright Room Called Day*, *Mojada*, *White Noise*, *Fire in Dreamland*, *Oedipus El Rey*, *Julius Caesar*, *Plenty*, *Southern Comfort*, *Barbecue*, *Buzzer*, 29 more Shakespeare productions, *Durango*, *Compulsion*, *The Ruby Sunrise*, *Lackawanna Blues*, *Stop Kiss*, *A Language of Their Own* and many more. Broadway: *The Tempest*, *Secret Rapture*, *The Queen and the Rebels*, *Ned and Jack*. Obie Award for Distinguished Stage Management and the SMA's 2017 Del Hughes Lifetime Achievement Award for Stage Management.

THE PUBLIC THEATER 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 theatres, The Public has long operated on the principles that theatre 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 Lab, Public Works, Public Shakespeare Initiative and Joe's Pub. Since premiering *Hair* in 1967, The Public continues to create the canon of American theatre and is currently represented on Broadway by the Tony Award-winning musicals *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Suffs* by Shaina Taub and *Hell's Kitchen* by Alicia Keys and Kristoffer Diaz. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 64 Tony Awards, 194 Obie Awards, 62 Drama Desk Awards, 61 Lortel Awards, 36 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, 65 AUDELCO Awards, 6 Antonyo Awards and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. publictheater.org

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A NOTE

FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT



Like many Australians, I grew up with fire.

Cooking breakfast over a campfire in the Brindabella mountains. The smoke from controlled burns in the hills behind my school. Bonfires on the beach on cold winter nights. The forest recovering after a burn, green shoots pushing through blackened trunks. Once, we even drove through a low wall of flames that had jumped the road in Kakadu National Park, driving north from Ubirr Rock.

You learn from a young age how to prepare for fire. How to clear the dead leaves from the gutters, rake up the dry vegetation and move it away from the house, when to stay put and when to evacuate. I was in my early teens when the record-breaking Millenium Drought started; I had turned 27 before it broke. Dams emptied, car washing was banned, so too garden sprinklers. People were told to limit their showers to three minutes or less.

In that context, the next fire season is always top of mind.

Each wildfire is distinct, an event in cultural memory. The explosive Christmastime fires of 1993 that surged into residential Sydney. Canberra's 2003 firestorm, ignited by dry-lightning strikes. 2009: Black Saturday in Victoria, 173 people killed. While touring the Blue Mountains in New South Wales in 2013, we woke to purple-black skies and a roaring hot wind. When we fled hours later, abandoning our accommodation, we joined with hundreds of local evacuees.

For Australians, fire was a phenomenon to map, monitor, and combat. We imagined that fire could be forecast, managed, and, in time, extinguished. Then the future of fire changed. **Over one single summer in 2019, the catastrophic nature of fire revealed itself as something new and unfamiliar.**

Unfamiliar to us, perhaps, but not to humans as a species. This is not the first time that humans have faced a dramatic shift in global climate, storms and floods and fires that escalate with shocking speed. The world has transformed many times in the past, and our ancestors bore witness to some of those shocks. We've been here before.

So maybe we need to look back to who we were, in order to find out who we might need to become.

DFinnigan

DAVID FINNIGAN
PLAYWRIGHT AND PERFORMER

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Sub A1 G. Alan Busch Jr.
Production Video Eli Garmon
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Lin-Manuel Miranda, photo by Camilla Falquez; Alicia Keys, photo courtesy of the artist; Shaina Taub, photo by Jimmy Fontaine.

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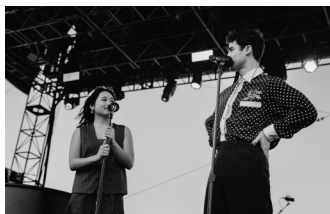


Theatre Kids Unite

Darren Criss and his friends rocked out at Elsie Fest 2024.

By Diep Tran. Photos by Heather Gershonowitz

On September 8, Golden Globe-winning actor Darren Criss hosted his theatre-themed music festival Elsie Fest. The event, which returned after a two-year hiatus, took place at the Pier 17 rooftop in Lower Manhattan and featured stage and screen stars—many of whom have upcoming theatre projects. Playbill was there to capture the festivities.



First row (from left): Darren Criss, Helen J Shen and Criss. Second row: Wayne Duvall, John Gallagher Jr., Stark Sands, and Adrian Blake Enscoe. Third row (from left): Rachel Zegler, Criss and Blake Roman, Alaska Thunderf*ck. Fourth row (from left): Dara Reneé, Jordan Fisher, Joy Woods. Fifth row (from left): Anais Mitchell, Criss and his friends. Sixth row: Derek Klena and Lizzy McAlpine



JOB director Michael Herwitz on switching careers.

By Andrew Gans

Twenty years ago, Michael Herwitz made his Broadway debut, as an eight-year-old child actor in *Dracula, the Musical*. Right after, he was in the cast of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. In the years since, Herwitz has pivoted to directing. He recently made his Broadway directorial debut with Max Wolf Friedlich's *JOB*. The play is a suspenseful two-hander, centering on an employee who begins working with a crisis therapist after becoming the subject of a viral video. It was recently extended through October 27 at the Hayes Theater. Below, Herwitz explains how he went from child actor to in-demand director of new plays.

What made you decide to become a director?

Michael Herwitz: Backstage at *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, I spent a lot of time in the stage management office. They took me under their wing and answered every question I had about theatre. They even gave me a copy of the calling script so I could practice calling the show at home in my bedroom. I was a 9-year-old Broadway nerd who checked the grosses, so I knew the show was falling short of its critical and commercial aspirations. I started to think about how we could fix the show. I would then share my notes with the stage managers. It was those guys (Michael Passaro, Peter Von Mayrhauser, Charlie Underhill, Jack McLeod, Seth Sklar-Heyn) who first told me, "You think like a director."

Can you share a favorite memory about acting on Broadway as a kid?

Working on Broadway as a kid was the most formative chapter of my life, and the feeling of radical belonging I felt backstage at the Belasco and the Hilton is the feeling I've been chasing my whole career. During *Dracula, the Musical*, my character was in about two minutes of the show at the very top of Act Two. After that scene, I would spend the rest of the show in Kelli O'Hara's dressing room (whose character was dead by that point), knitting together until curtain call. Kelli and I recently had a beautiful email correspondence around opening night for *JOB*, which was 20 years to the day of the first preview for *Dracula*.

What advice would you give your younger self or anyone starting out?

I spent a lot of time waiting for someone who I perceived to have more power than me to pick me out of the crowd and put me on the path to success. And while I gained a ton from mentors, teachers, and people further along, my greatest resources are my friends—my peers. No one is coming down from on high to scoop you up. It's the people to your right and left who are your greatest resource. They are going to pull you up, and it's your job to pull them up, too.



Childhood Joys

Alyssa Milano is tapping into her inner child with *Chicago*.

By Diep Tran and Jeffrey Vizcaino

Alyssa Milano may be known for her screen work, including the television show *Charmed*. But she actually got her start in theatre. “When I was eight years old, I was in the second national touring company of *Annie* for 18 months. That was my very first professional gig,” recalls Milano. “I did the first musical version of *Jane Eyre* when I was little, which was a very special experience, because my dad actually helped with the props. Theatre, that’s the beauty of it—the community that you create.”

Though Milano’s career has taken her away from the stage, she has now returned. She’s playing Roxie Hart in *Chicago* on Broadway in a limited engagement through November 10. Milano says she was inspired to do musicals again because of her daughter, who is now doing musicals in her elementary school. “I just had a moment where I was like, ‘Wow, she’s really powerful and strong, and I don’t know how she’s doing it.’” And then Milano realized, it was because of theatre, which led her to thinking: “I did that at that age. Why aren’t I doing that now?” Milano says it’s been a family tradition to go to New York every year and see a Broadway show.

“The great thing about musical theatre at a young age is, not only does it give you confidence, and also all of those things that you need to be a functioning adult, but also, it gives you community,” she says. “There’s such an ease knowing that she’s going to be in middle school and know who her people are.”

And the process of rehearsing *Chicago*, in learning the Kander and Ebb songs and Fosse’s intricate choreographer—it’s taken Milano back to her younger self.

“It’s really hard,” she says with a smile about learning the choreography. “I remember being eight, and rehearsing for *Annie*, and there was this one dance step that sent me off the stage crying because I



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could not get it. I could not get it. And there have been those moments in [*Chicago*]. But I’m not crying, mind you, because now I have faith that I will get it eventually.” And the most astonishing thing is? “I still remember that move from when I was eight years old. It’s never left my body.” That means that *Chicago* will also never leave her body. “And that’s really cool,” she says with a smile.

And it’s also shown Milano what she’s capable of: “What an amazing thing to be older than I ever intended to be and to still be doing something for the first time.”