

THE
PUBLIC.

FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE
press@publictheater.org | 212.539.8624

[LINK TO HEADSHOTS](#)

**THE PUBLIC THEATER
TO TOUR
MOBILE UNIT'S SUMMER OF JOY
TO ALL FIVE BOROUGHES
JULY 31–AUGUST 29**

SHAKESPEARE: CALL AND RESPONSE
Conceived and Directed by Patricia McGregor
Text by William Shakespeare

VERSES @ WORK – THE ABRIDGED MIX
Presented by The Public Theater
Created and Performed by Malik Work
Directed by Vernice Miller

**The National Black Theatre's Stage for Healing & Resilience
Co-Produced by The Public Theater and National Black Theatre**

**In Partnership with the NYC Department of Transportation
and In Collaboration with the NYC Civic Engagement Commission's People's Bus
Free Four-Week Tour to Pop Up in Public Plazas
Continuing Tradition of Access to Shakespeare for All**

July 14, 2021 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced today that the theater's acclaimed **MOBILE UNIT** will return this summer with **MOBILE UNIT'S SUMMER OF JOY**, a free four-week tour to all five boroughs beginning July 31 and running through August 29 as New York City joyously returns to life. In partnership with New York City's Department of Transportation, **MOBILE UNIT'S SUMMER OF JOY** will pop up at public plazas in neighborhoods that were both traditionally visited by the Mobile Unit tours and hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.

This Mobile Unit tour will break traditional theatrical molds and invite people to gather in public venues and play a role in creating each show. **MOBILE UNIT'S SUMMER OF JOY** will offer New Yorkers the opportunity to participate in a kind of narrative that speaks to our collective and individual resilience, healing, and joy in this long-awaited moment to be together again.

"The Mobile Unit is the purest expression of The Public's conviction that the culture belongs to everyone. Our return this summer is a thrilling and responsive artistic expression born from this historical moment. We are responding to the call of community and creating a unifying embodiment of theater for this city," said **Artistic Director Oskar Eustis**. "With Patricia McGregor's fabulous *Shakespeare: Call and*

Response, Malik Work's engaging *Verses @ Work*, and National Black Theatre's profound partnership in creating a community stage, *Mobile Unit's Summer Of Joy* sets out to bring our community together, to remind us, after a year of isolation, that it is all of us together that make New York the miraculous city it is. Welcome back!"

"It is essential for Mobile Unit to build something that could speak to the moment—a unique format that would reinvigorate our communal spaces and our connection to each other," said **Director of Mobile Unit Karen Ann Daniels**. "This is our first partnership with the Department of Transportation. It's our first time in many years with the National Black Theatre. And yet, we all came to the table with a strong sense that it is only through the creation of our art and inviting our community's participation in it, that we could offer healing, resilience, and the unbridled joy of the simple act of gathering."

MOBILE UNIT'S SUMMER OF JOY will be a pop-up experience in New York's open spaces with three key community and performance elements. Each day will begin with the **National Black Theatre's Stage for Healing and Resilience**, co-produced by The Public Theater and National Black Theatre in continuation of a relationship that dates back to the 1960s. This community stage will be followed by **VERSES @ WORK – THE ABRIDGED MIX**, written and performed by Mobile Unit artist Malik Work. The experience will culminate in **SHAKESPEARE: CALL AND RESPONSE**, conceived and directed by Patricia McGregor.

"In many ways, collaborating with The Public Theater's Mobile Unit is an homage to the dynamic and beautiful partnership Joseph Papp and Dr. Barbara Ann Teer forged on the Mobile Stage in 1965 with *We Real Cool* by Gwendolyn Brooks. This was the first-known choreopoem and the performance raised money for Amiri Baraka's defense fund," said **National Black Theatre Executive Artistic Director Jonathan McCrory**. "Now, more than a half century later and during a catalytic moment in our society, NBT is producing the Mobile Unit's community engagement series. As culture reopens its physical doors, what an honor it will be to focus our communal efforts on transformative healing: celebrating our resilience, acknowledging our collective grief, and bathing us with the power of love and joy."

Mobile Unit has forged a new partnership with NYC's Department of Transportation to bring this summer's tour to new locations—outdoor public plazas—in the communities Mobile Unit has visited since its inception. In collaboration with local community groups, **MOBILE UNIT'S SUMMER OF JOY** will provide open, accessible spaces to collectively connect, heal, and create.

"We are thrilled to work with The Public Theater and our community partners to bring a new and innovative use of public space in some of the neighborhoods hardest hit by the pandemic," said **NYC DOT Commissioner Hank Gutman**. "Every summer for decades, The Public has brought Free Shakespeare in the Park to Central Park. Now, thanks to this partnership, residents of all ages and backgrounds will be able to access even more free, high quality theater—just steps from where they live. As New York City continues to recover, our plazas and Open Streets will play a significant role in *Mobile Unit's Summer Of Joy*, connecting New Yorkers to culture within safe communal outdoor spaces where they can interact and enrich their lives."

The tour stops will also be visited by **People's Bus**, a project of the New York City Civic Engagement Commission that focuses on five initiatives: well-being and mental health; climate justice and environmental health; know your rights education; food security; and participatory budgeting and economic empowerment.

"The New York City Civic Engagement Commission (CEC) is proud to support The Public Theater's *Mobile Unit's Summer Of Joy*. Both art and government need to be made accessible to people and brought into communities," said **Dr. Sarah Sayeed, Chair & Executive Director of the New York City Civic Engagement Commission**. "That is the mission of CEC's People's Bus, which is transforming a retired city vehicle into a community center on wheels, engaging people in NYC's civic life through beauty and joy."

TOUR SCHEDULE:

All performances begin at 4:30 p.m., except for the August 8 performance at Johnny Hartman Plaza, which will begin at 2:00 p.m.

July 31-August 1 - Astor Place (Manhattan)
August 5-6 - Roberto Clemente Plaza (Bronx)
August 7-8 - Johnny Hartman Plaza (Manhattan)
August 12 - Osborn Plaza (Brooklyn)
August 13 - Albee Square (Brooklyn)
August 14-15 - 125th Street Plaza (Manhattan)
August 20 - Albee Square (Brooklyn)
August 21-22 - Myrtle/Wyckoff Plaza (Queens)
August 28-29 - Osborn Plaza (Brooklyn)

More tour dates and locations to be announced soon. A full tour schedule and more details can be found at publictheater.org.

SHAKESPEARE: CALL AND RESPONSE

Conceived and Directed by Patricia McGregor

Text by William Shakespeare

The company includes **Sofia Jean Gomez, Teresa Avia Lim, Reza Salazar, and Malik Work.**

Rooted in the vibrant interplay between performers and audience, **SHAKESPEARE: CALL AND RESPONSE** is an hour-long celebration of text, music, dance, and improvisation with a live crowd. Built for the plazas and outdoor venues able to host performances following the confinement of the pandemic, the piece centers on four actors who transform into a variety of roles based on feedback from the audience and is anchored by an iambic-spitting MC and DJ duo. No two shows will be the same. Crafted with an expert Shakespearean ringleader, the performers take on over a dozen roles in an hour, inviting audience members to play along as the scene partner. In the spirit of artistically awakening dormant spaces and communing with audiences hungry to feast on the poetry and play, **SHAKESPEARE: CALL AND RESPONSE** enlivens a dynamic dialogue between the greatest writers of all time and citizens of one of the greatest cities in the world.

SHAKESPEARE: CALL AND RESPONSE will feature scenic design by **Diggle**, costume design by **Katherine O'Neill**, sound system design by **Jorge Olivo**, and choreography by **Paloma McGregor**. **Katie Kennedy** will serve as Production Stage Manager.

VERSES @ WORK – THE ABRIDGED MIX

Presented by The Public Theater

Created and Performed by Malik Work

Directed by Vernice Miller

Mobile Unit artist, actor/writer/emcee **Malik Work** shares a set of excerpts from his original play *Verses @ Work*. Directed by **Vernice Miller**, *Verses @ Work* tells a story that begins in the heart of early millennium NYC nightlife, when the worlds of live hip-hop and jazz begin to intertwine historically, in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The music eventually takes a backseat to a tumultuous journey on which Malik is transformed. The lessons of said journey are captured in this modern-day version of epic poetry, steeped in the legacy of oral tradition. **VERSES @ WORK – THE ABRIDGED MIX** is specially curated for this moment in 2021 for **MOBILE UNIT'S SUMMER OF JOY**. Call it verse, spoken word, rap, monologue, soliloquy, and more, but Malik weaves an engaging, vibrant, and personal account, loosely analogous to Homer's *Odyssey*. This award-winning show was featured at the National Arts Festival in Makhanda, South Africa, and will make its debut at Joe's Pub in the Fall of 2021. The South African press aptly named Malik "the griot from New York, Shakespeare of the streets."

THE NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE'S STAGE FOR HEALING AND RESILIENCE

Co-Produced by The Public Theater and National Black Theatre

In partnership with the National Black Theatre, **MOBILE UNIT'S SUMMER OF JOY** invites audiences into a space of reflection and meditation, as well as actively giving voice to their own experiences, through **National Black Theatre's Stage for Healing and Resilience**. The community stage features artists from Mobile Unit's community partners sharing their own narratives of resilience and hope in spoken word, poems, monologues, and songs.

ABOUT THE MOBILE UNIT:

Now in its 10th year, The Public Theater's **MOBILE UNIT** is a modern reimagining of Joseph Papp's Mobile Theater. The Mobile Unit reaches across economic and geographic barriers to the arts by meeting our communities where they are—staging free professional theater productions and programs in local neighborhood venues such as libraries, homeless shelters, correctional facilities, and community centers across all five New York City boroughs. Mobile Unit has served thousands of audiences with critically acclaimed productions, including a 2018 National tour of Lynn Nottage's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Sweat*. In 2020, Mobile Unit received a Special Drama Desk Award for its program. During the pandemic, Mobile Unit launched a digital workshop inside the NYC Department of Corrections called *Hip-Hop vs. Shakespeare* where participants were encouraged to write their own stories. Mobile Unit believes theater is its most powerful when it reflects and connects to the lives of our community.

To support The Public Theater, become a Supporter or Partner by visiting publictheater.org/supporttoday.

BIOS:

PATRICIA MCGREGOR (Shakespeare: Call and Response *Conceiver & Director*). Born in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, Patricia McGregor is a director and writer working in theater, TV/film, and music. McGregor has twice been profiled by *The New York Times* for her direction of world premieres. Productions include *Lights Out: Nat "King" Cole* (co-writer and director, Geffen Playhouse, People's Light); *Sisters In Law* (Wallis Annenberg); *What You Are, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Measure for Measure* (The Old Globe); *Skeleton Crew* (Geffen Playhouse, Studio Theater); *Good Grief* (Center Theater Group); *Hamlet* (The Public); *The Parchman Hour* (Guthrie Theater); *Ugly Lies the Bone* (Roundabout Theatre Company); *brownsville song...* (Lincoln Center); *Indomitable: James Brown* (The Apollo); *Holding It Down* (Metropolitan Museum); *A Raisin in the Sun, The Winter's Tale, Spunk* (California Shakespeare Theater); *Adoration of the Old Woman* (INTAR); *Blood Dazzler* (Harlem Stage); *Four Electric Ghosts* (The Kitchen) and the world premiere of *Hurt Village* (Signature Theatre Company). She has directed the 24-Hour Plays on Broadway and served as tour consultant to Raphael Saadiq and J Cole. McGregor co-conceived and directed the oratorio *Place* with Ted Hearne and Saul Williams, which was recently nominated for a Grammy and a Pulitzer. McGregor co-founded Angela's Pulse with her sister, choreographer and organizer Paloma McGregor, is Artist in Residence for Adam Driver's Arts in the Armed Forces, is a Time Warner 150 fellow, and serves on the advisory board for the Parent Artist Advocacy League. She is a member of London's National Theater International Director's Lab and a Usual Suspect at New York Theater Workshop. McGregor attended the Yale School of Drama, where she was a Paul & Daisy Soros Fellow and Artistic Director of the Yale Cabaret.

MALIK WORK (Verses @ Work – The Abridged Mix *Writer & Shakespeare: Call and Response Company*) has written and performed the highly celebrated original hip-hop musical *Verses @ Work*, garnering him a nomination for Best Solo Performance at the AUDELCO Awards. The film version of *Verses* won the International Spotlight Award at the Los Angeles Brazilian Film Festival. As an emcee, he's a founding member of The Real Live Show, a groundbreaking, international jazz/hip-hop band. As an actor, he's been seen off-Broadway, on network television, and on the big screen. As a teaching artist, he is a faculty member at the National Theater Institute, TEAK Fellowship, and The Public Theater's own Mobile Unit. www.malikwork.com, @malikwork IG/Twitter.

VERNICE MILLER (*Verses @ Work – The Abridged Mix Director*) has presented theatre and film internationally for the last 40 years. She has devised work with incarcerated youth at the Finger Lakes Residential Center in Lansing, NY; collaborated with Wynton Marsalis on *Eatonville*, a Zora Neal Hurston project; worked for 10 years internationally with HBO comedienne, Hazelle Goodman; and pre-pandemic, shadowed director Felix Alcalá on the CBS series “Madam Secretary.” Vernice directed *Verses @ Work* with Malik Work for the 2020 National Arts Festival in South Africa, as well as *Three Women (Break the Silence)* by anthropologist Dr. Omotayo Jolaosho at the Market Theater Laboratory in Johannesburg. In Slovenia and Poland, Miller performed and co-directed *Nomansland* for Seth Baumrin’s Subpoetics International. She directed *Bee Trapped Inside the Window* by Saviana Stanescu, commissioned by Civic Ensemble in Ithaca, NY. She is an adjunct lecturer at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and recipient of the London New Play Festival’s Best Actress Award for her solo performance of *Medea: Now*. With Joann Yarrow, Vernice Miller co-founded A Laboratory for Actor Training Experimental Theatre Company in 1995 to evolve work inspired by Roberta Carreri and Eugenio Barba at Odin Teatret in Denmark (www.ALATetc.org).

SOFIA JEAN GOMEZ (Shakespeare: Call and Response *Company*). NY credits: *Angels in America, Parts I and II* (Signature Theatre Company); Page 73, New World Stages, Manhattan Theatre Club, New Georges, and Lake Lucille Chekhov Project. Regional: Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Shakespeare Theatre Company, The Old Globe, Yale Repertory, Berkeley Repertory, San Diego Repertory, Goodman Theatre, Denver Center Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, McCarter Theatre Center, Arizona Theatre Company, and The Shakespeare Theatre of NJ. *American Theatre* magazine named her as one of the “Actors Playwrights Love.” Yale School of Drama. SP Trauma Response Education, RedCross Adult Mental Health Certification, and ICOC Intimacy Captain Certified.

TERESA AVIA LIM (Shakespeare: Call and Response *Company*). Broadway: Ayad Akhtar’s *JUNK* at Lincoln Center. Other works: The Public’s all-female Shakespeare in the Park production of *Taming of the Shrew*; NAATCO’s *Awake and Sing*; *Macbeth* with The Public’s Mobile Unit; Gingold Group’s *Caesar and Cleopatra*; *The Moors* at Playwrights Realm. Lim originated her roles in *Peerless*, *Water by the Spoonful*, *Edith Can Shoot Things and Hit Them*, and *Concerning Strange Devices From the Distant West*. TV/Film: “Monsterland,” “The Code,” “Ray Donovan,” “Blue Bloods,” “Limitless,” “Unforgettable,” “Law and Order: Criminal Intent,” “Group,” and *Monster*. She is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama and an inaugural Recipient of the Jerome L. Greene Foundation Scholarship.

REZA SALAZAR (Shakespeare: Call and Response *Company*) began his acting career as a child in South America, working with his mother as clowns. The Public: *Richard II*, Mobile Unit’s *The Tempest*, *Oedipus El Rey*. Select Theater: *Mariela en el Desierto* (Repertorio Español), *My Mañana Comes* (Lortel Award nomination). Regional: *Floyd’s* (Guthrie Theatre), *Sweat* (Arena Stage). TV: “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt,” “Daredevil,” “The Blacklist,” “Law & Order,” “Law & Order: CI,” “Louie,” “The Knick,” “Believe.” Film: *The Prisoner*, *Con Dios*, *The Imperialists Are Still Alive*, *See Girl Run*, *The Inquisition of Camilo Sanz*. Musician: *MICHA Musica* (Joe’s Pub). Director: *Missing Them* (Working Theater). Salazar is making his Broadway debut this fall in a new play by two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lynn Nottage.

ABOUT NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE:

National Black Theatre (NBT), the nation’s first revenue-generating Black arts complex, was founded in 1968 by the late visionary artist Dr. Barbara Ann Teer. NBT is the longest-running Black theatre in New York City, one of the oldest theaters founded and consistently operated by a woman of color in the nation and most recently included in the permanent collection of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. NBT’s core mission is to produce transformational theater that helps to shift the inaccuracy around African Americans’ cultural identity by telling authentic stories of Black lifestyle. As an alternative learning environment, NBT uses theater arts as a means to educate, enrich, entertain, empower, and inform the national conscience around current social issues impacting our communities. Under the leadership of Sade Lythcott, CEO and Jonathan McCrory, Artistic Director, NBT’s 3 core

programs—the Theater Arts Program, Communications Arts Program, and Entrepreneurial Arts Program—help reshape a more inclusive American theater field by playing a dynamic and critical role providing an artistically rigorous and culturally sensitive space for artists of color to experiment, develop, and present new work. Working with trailblazing artists from Nona Hendrix to Jeremy O. Harris, and helping to launch the careers most recently of artists such as Dominique Morisseau, Radha Blank, Mfoniso Udofia, Saheem Ali, Lee Edward Colston II, and Ebony Noelle Golden, and incubating Obie Award-winning companies like The Movement Theatre Company and Harlem9's 48Hours in Harlem, NBT's cultural production remains unparalleled. Located in the heart of Harlem, NBT welcomes more than 90,000 visitors annually and has produced 300+ original works, won 53 Audelco Awards for theater excellence, a CEBA Award of Merit, and for the last two years, been nominated for multiple Drama Desk awards for its excellence in theater production. NBT is supported by grants from the Ford Foundation, New York Community Trust, Shubert Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Jerome Foundation, Andrew Mellon Foundation, City Council of New York, City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs, Columbia Service Society, and private donations. Visit www.nationalblacktheatre.org or follow NBT on Facebook (@NationalBlackTheatre) and Twitter/Instagram (@NatBlackTheatre).

ABOUT THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION:

The **New York City Department of Transportation's** (NYC DOT) mission is to provide for the safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible movement of people and goods in the City of New York and to maintain and enhance the transportation infrastructure crucial to the economic vitality and quality of life of our primary customers, City residents. NYC DOT's Public Space Unit oversees the agency's efforts to create, manage, and maintain public spaces that prioritize pedestrians and cyclists across the city. Public space programs include Open Streets, Plazas, StreetSeats, and more. The Mobile Unit is being brought to plazas through the Public Space Activations program which seeks to provide high quality activations to public spaces in high-need neighborhoods, with a particular focus on areas hardest hit by COVID-19.

ABOUT PEOPLE'S BUS:

The People's Bus is a project of [The New York City Civic Engagement Commission](#) and their [Public Artist in Residence](#), Yazmany Arboleda. The Civic Engagement Commission was created in 2018 through a Mayoral Charter Revision Commission and citywide vote. CEC's Mission is to enhance civic participation in order to increase civic trust and strengthen democracy. The Commission is committed to engaging and listening to community while lifting up the voices of all New Yorkers, particularly the underserved and marginalized. The **People's Bus** is a retired NYC Department of Correction vehicle that is being transformed into a mobile community center—democracy on wheels. The People's Bus aims to meet New Yorkers where they are—literally and figuratively, providing them with resources, education, and engagement.

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, 184 Obie Awards, 55 Drama Desk Awards, 58 Lortel Awards, 34 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, 56 AUDELCO Awards, 6 Antonyo Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. publictheater.org

The Public stands in honor of the first inhabitants and our ancestors. We acknowledge the land on which The Public Theater stands—the original homeland of the Lenape people. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory. The Public also gives our respect to the people of Seneca Village, a community of Black property owners who were eradicated from their land, where The Delacorte Theater now makes its home. We recognize the sacrifice that these ancestors made. We honor the generations of stewards and we pay our respects to the many diverse indigenous peoples still connected to this land.

Support for **MOBILE UNIT** provided by **JetBlue Airways, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, The McLaughlin Children's Trust, Abrams Foundation, and ConEdison.**

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

CONNECT WITH US

[Facebook.com/PublicTheater](https://www.facebook.com/PublicTheater)

Twitter | [@PublicTheaterNY](https://twitter.com/PublicTheaterNY)

Instagram | [@PublicTheaterNY](https://www.instagram.com/PublicTheaterNY)

#