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**THE PUBLIC THEATER  
ANNOUNCES  
WORLD PREMIERE AUDIO PLAY  
*SHADOW/LAND*  
ADDED TO SPRING DIGITAL SEASON**

**Written by Erika Dickerson-Despenza  
Directed by Candis C. Jones**

**Complete Cast Features Te'Era Coleman, Lizan Mitchell,  
Lance E. Nichols, Lori Elizabeth Parquet,  
Sunni Patterson, and Michelle Wilson**

**Podcast to Premiere April 13 on New *Public Play Now* Platform**

February 17, 2021 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced the world premiere audio play, **SHADOW/LAND**, written by Tow Foundation Playwright-in-Residence **Erika Dickerson-Despenza** has been added to The Public's spring digital season. Directed by Lilly Award winner **Candis C. Jones**, **SHADOW/LAND** will premiere on Tuesday, April 13 and be available for free on-demand streaming via The Public's new **Public Play Now** platform and wherever podcasts are available.

The company of **SHADOW/LAND** will feature **Te'Era Coleman** (*9-1-1 Caller*), **Lizan Mitchell** (*Magalee*), **Lance E. Nichols** (*9-1-1 Dispatcher and Caller*), **Lori Elizabeth Parquet** (*9-1-1 Dispatcher and Caller*), **Sunni Patterson** (*Griot*), and **Michelle Wilson** (*Ruth*).

"*Shadow/land* is a beautiful, poetic, and heartbreaking account of Hurricane Katrina and the history and heroism of a New Orleans family. This production announces a major new American voice, Erika Dickerson-Despenza. Under the acute direction of Candis C. Jones, *shadow/land* captivates and transcends," said Artistic Director **Oskar Eustis**.

Tow Playwright-in-Residence and Laurents/Hatcher Foundation Award winner Erika Dickerson-Despenza joins The Public's digital stage with an audio production of **SHADOW/LAND**, a harrowing new drama set amid the ongoing devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Ruth coaxes her mother, Magalee, to sell Shadowland, the family business and New Orleans's first air-conditioned dancehall and hotel for Black people. But as Hurricane Katrina begins her ruin, Ruth is forced to wrestle with all that she's ready to let go. Directed by Lilly Award winner Candis C. Jones, **SHADOW/LAND** is the first installment of a 10-play cycle traversing the Katrina diaspora in an examination of the ongoing effects of disaster, evacuation, displacement, and urban renewal rippling in and beyond New Orleans.

"*Shadow/land* began as a recovery project through which I resurrected my family's business, as all photographs of Shadowland were claimed by The Flood that followed Hurricane Katrina. The play grew into a timely meditation on how apocalypse clarifies or redirects our wanting. It is an epic exploration of queer Black southern women navigating disaster, duty and desire," said *shadow/land* Playwright **Erika Dickerson-Despenza**.

"*Shadow/land* taps into the reflective excavation happening across the nation. This sonic experience will be one that bears witness to our resilience as well as our losses," said *shadow/land* Director **Candis C. Jones**. "The care and vulnerability shared in our rehearsal process was a balm that I'm honored to extend to audiences."

**SHADOW/LAND** will feature original music composed by **Delfeayo Marsalis**, sound design by **Palmer Hefferan**, audio coordination and recording engineering by **Will Pickens**, lead audio engineering by **Black Rose Sound** (Izumi Rosas and Chris Morocco), and audio engineer will be **Twí McCallum**. **Lauren A. Whitehead** will serve as dramaturgical consultant, the creative content producer will be **Soyica Colbert**, and dialect coach will be **Dawn-Elin Fraser**. **Kamra A. Jacobs** will serve as production stage manager.

**Public Play Now** is a new digital destination where you can watch, listen, and enjoy The Public Theater's programming, including Joe's Pub, all in one place. Featuring a wide range of digital content, including previously released audio plays like *Shipwreck* and *Richard II*, exciting Joe's Pub Concerts, Public Forum civic discussions and panels, the Public Works documentary *Under the Greenwood Tree*, show clips and behind-the-scenes content from our past productions, and more! Visit [publictheater.org/playnow](https://publictheater.org/playnow).

This season has been unlike any The Public has experienced before. The Public continues to be unable to gather in-person in theaters and is navigating immense challenges because of the global coronavirus pandemic, and in response to the long overdue reckoning around racism in the country and in the theater community, The Public has begun interrogating its practices and systems to move closer to being an inclusive, equitable, and anti-racist organization. This is a moment of uncertainty, transformation, action, and accountability. There is much work to be done, but The Public's mission has not changed, and artists and their voices play a critical role in this moment too.

With theaters closed and in-person programming on pause, The Public Theater continues to navigate the immense challenges created by the pandemic, including an operating budget that has contracted significantly, substantial furloughs among full-time staff, and a lack of employment opportunities to offer the freelance artistic community. The Public continues to rely on its community of loyal supporters who stand alongside the organization as it upholds its mission during this uncertain time. With the generous contributions of supporters as the only current source of revenue, The Public continues to reimagine theater for the digital space, support a range of artistic voices in making new work, and share it with a growing global audience. Become a Partner or a Supporter of The Public Theater today at [www.publictheater.org](https://www.publictheater.org)

The Public Theater strives to make its performances, digital content, and facilities accessible to all patrons and visitors. For additional information or if you have questions, need assistance, or an accommodation to access our digital content, please email [accessibility@publictheater.org](mailto:accessibility@publictheater.org).

## **BIOS**

**ERIKA DICKERSON-DESPENZA** (*shadow/land* Playwright) is a Blk, queer feminist poet-playwright and cultural-memory worker from Chicago, Illinois. Awards include Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Finalist (2021), Laurents/Hatcher Foundation Award (2020), Thom Thomas Award (2020), Lilly Award (2020), Barrie and Bernice Stavis Award (2020), Grist 50 Fixer (2020), and Princess Grace Playwriting Award (2019). Residencies and fellowships include Tow Playwright-in-Residence at The Public Theater (2019-2020), U.S. Water Alliance National Arts & Culture Delegate (2019), New York Stage and Film Fellow-in-Residence (2019), New Harmony Project Writer-in Residence (2019), Dramatists Guild Foundation Fellow (2018-2019), and The Lark Van Lier New Voices Fellow (2018). Communities include BYP100 Squad Member, Ars Nova Play Group (2019-2021), and Youngblood Collective (EST). Commissions include The Public Theater, Studio Theatre, and Williamstown Theatre Festival. Productions

include *cullud wattah* (originally slated at The Public Theater, 2020; Victory Gardens Theater, 2021), and *[hieroglyph]* (San Francisco Playhouse, 2021).

**CANDIS C. JONES** (shadow/land *Director*). Selected credits include *cullud wattah* (The Public Theater), *53% OF* (The Alliance Theater), *Everybody* (NYU Tisch), *Trapt* (Joe's Pub), *Nike* (A.C.T. New Strands Festival), *House of the Negro Insane* (Bay Area Playwrights Festival), *Pipeline* (Detroit Public Theater), and *Name Calling* (Kennedy Center). Upcoming includes *Detroit 67'* (DC Signature Theatre), and *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* (Cincinnati Playhouse). Awards and Fellowships include 2016 Lilly Award, WP Theater's 2018-2020 Lab, and Drama League Alumni. [www.candiscjones.com](http://www.candiscjones.com)

**TE'ERA COLEMAN** (*9-1-1 Caller*), originally from Louisville, K.Y., holds a BFA in Acting and minors in Musical Theatre and Dance from Point Park Conservatory. Coleman is a member of the NOLA Project Theatre Company and is expanding her artistic home to New York City. Some of her beloved credits include *Harry and The Thief* (Mimi), *Men on Boats* (Old Shady), *Our Lady of 121st Street* (Inez), *All The Way* (Coretta Scott King), and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (Dussie Mae). When Coleman is not acting, she is pursuing her MBA in information technology at Pace University and living her best life.

**LIZAN MITCHELL** (*Magalee*) has appeared on Broadway in *Electra*, *Having Our Say*, and *So Long on Lonely Street*. Her Off-Broadway credits include *Passages* (SoHo Rep), *The First Noel*, *Brownsville Song*, *Cell*, *Rosmersholm*, *For Colored Girls* (25th Anniversary), *Gum*, and *Ma Rose and Salt*. She has been seen regionally in *Richard III* (The Shakespeare Theatre), *My Lord What A Night* (CATF), *Pride and Prejudice* (Rep. Theater of St. Louis), *The Tempest* (Old Globe), *Skeleton Crew* (Trinity Rep), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Arena Stage), *The Good Peaches* (Cleveland Play House), *The House That Will Not Stand* (Yale Repertory, Berkeley Repertory, Victory Gardens), *Dead and Breathing* (CATF, National Black Theater UK premiere), and *A Trip to Bountiful* (Cincinnati Playhouse, Roundhouse Theater). Film and TV credits include *Detroit*, "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt," "Deadbeat," *We'll Never Have Paris*, "Golden Boy," "John Adams," "The Good Wife," *The Human Stain*, *The Preacher's Wife*, "Sesame Street," and "The Wire."

**LANCE E. NICHOLS** (*9-1-1 Dispatcher and Caller*). A veteran actor/coach with over 200 IMDB credits in film, television, commercials and theatre. Nichols is a native of New Orleans who lived and worked in Los Angeles as an actor for 25 years before returning to his hometown in 2002. Hurricane Katrina displaced him and his family again in August 2005 back to Los Angeles for 14 months where he continued to steadily work. He returned permanently to New Orleans in November 2006 where he currently resides. His credits span four decades with such television shows as "Cheers," "Third Rock From The Sun," "Mad About You," "The Drew Carey Show," "Fresh Prince of Bel Air," "Charmed," "Buffy The Vampire Slayer," "NYPD Blue," "ER," "Martin," "The Jamie Foxx Show," and "The Steve Harvey Show." He has had recurring roles on HBO's "Treme," "House of Cards," "Into The Badlands," and currently, "Queen of the South." You can catch him now in the AppleTV film *Palmer* with Justin Timberlake, as well as the Amazon Prime limited series "Shepherd."

**LORI ELIZABETH PARQUET** (*9-1-1 Dispatcher and Caller*). Off-Broadway credits include *Macbeth* and *Dispatches From (A)mended America*. Off-Off Broadway includes *The Providence of Neighboring Bodies* (Dutch Kills Theater/Ars Nova), *The Honeycomb Trilogy: Sovereign* (Gideon Productions), and *Medea* (Phoenix Theatre Ensemble). International credits include *Pillars of Society* at Teater Ibsen in Skien, Norway, *The Providence of Neighboring Bodies* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. She is the 2019 winner of the New York Innovative Theatre Award for Outstanding Actress in a Lead Role for her performance in Flux Theatre Ensemble's *Operating Systems*. Parquet is a native of New Orleans, Louisiana and holds a B.A. in Theatre Arts from Cornell University.

**SUNNI PATTERSON** (*Griot*). New Orleans native and visionary, Sunni Patterson, is an internationally acclaimed poet, performer, workshop facilitator, certified life coach/spiritual consultant, and initiated priestess. She began her career as a full-time high school teacher, and much of her life since has been devoted to serving as a cultural worker and activist. Through art, poetry, and praise (ancestral remembrance), Patterson encourages dialogue, connectivity, and healing. Her artistry and gift has allowed her to grace a plethora of stages and platforms. Patterson is a 2020 John O'Neal Cultural Arts Fellow, and currently serves as a Resident Artist for both the City of New Orleans' Claiborne Corridor Cultural Initiative and Junebug Productions.

**MICHELLE WILSON** (*Ruth*) is featured in the Emmy-winning Apollo Theater documentary, and participated in the HBO Special of Ta-Nehisi Coates', "Between the World and Me." She may be seen on the big screen as Sarita in *Premature*, as Pollok in *The True Adventures of Wolfboy*, and in *The Rest of Us* as Staci's Mom. In her most recent stage appearance in NYTW's *The House That Will Not Stand*, she called on spirits as the other-worldly Marie Josephine. Wilson is best known for her work in Lynn Nottage's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Sweat*, originating the role of Cynthia at The Public before moving to Broadway and receiving three Tony Award nominations including Best Featured Actress for Wilson. Wilson wields powers as Sara Jordan in Steven Spielberg's "Amazing Stories," Signs of Life episode. Other notable TV appearances include "The Good Fight," "Blue Bloods," "Madame Secretary," and more. More theatre credits include the Broadway production of *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Detroit '67*, *Follow Me to Nellie's*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *Two Trains Running*, *The People Before the Park*, and others. She looks forward to the release of the Adrien Brody led film, *Clean*, previously slated to debut in the 2020 Tribeca Film Festival.

### **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](http://publictheater.org)

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