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THE PUBLIC THEATER TO RELEASE WORLD PREMIERE AUDIO PLAY SHADOW/LAND TUESDAY, APRIL 13

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

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

Three-Part Discussion Series “The Clearing” to Accompany Audio Play Release; Hosted by Soyica Diggs Colbert and Featuring Sheila Foster, Shana M. Griffin, Jack Moore, Cara Page, Imani Perry, and Lauren A. Whitehead

April 6, 2021 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) will debut the world premiere audio play **SHADOW/LAND**, written by Tow Foundation Playwright-in-Residence **Erika Dickerson-Despenza**, on Tuesday, April 13. Directed by Lilly Award winner **Candis C. Jones**, **SHADOW/LAND** will be available for free on-demand streaming via The Public’s new **Public Play Now** platform and wherever podcasts are available through April 13, 2022.

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 will be accompanied by a three-part discussion series titled “**The Clearing**,” inspired by a space of healing in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. Hosted by Soyica Diggs Colbert, “The Clearing” features three episodes: “A Useable Past,” focusing on how **SHADOW/LAND** incorporates the history of New Orleans; “Imagining and Building New Structures,” exploring why some areas and communities are hit harder when disaster strikes; and “Healing,” considering the essential place of art in recovering from

catastrophe. Playwright Erika Dickerson-Despenza and director Candis C. Jones are joined by scholars Sheila Foster, Shana M. Griffin, Cara Page, and Imani Perry and dramaturgs Jack Moore and Lauren A. Whitehead in these crucial conversations about healing and rebuilding. “The Clearing” honors Toni Morrison and all the great Black women writers and healers that have paved the way.

The company of **SHADOW/LAND** features **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 features 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 engineering by **Twi McCallum**. **Lauren A. Whitehead** served as dramaturgical consultant, the creative content producer was **Soyica Diggs Colbert**, and the dialect coach was **Dawn-Elin Fraser**. **Kamra A. Jacobs** served 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, **Public Play Now** includes previously released audio plays like *Romeo y Julieta*, *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.

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 our theaters still closed and in-person programming on pause, The Public Theater has had to contend with unprecedented institutional challenges throughout the past year, 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 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.

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

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