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**THE PUBLIC THEATER
CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY
OF LARRY KRAMER'S *THE NORMAL HEART*
WITH ONE-NIGHT-ONLY BENEFIT READING
DIRECTED BY TONY KUSHNER**

"There can be little doubt that 'The Normal Heart' is the most outspoken play around – or that it speaks up about a subject that justifies its author's unflinching... sense of urgency."

— The New York Times (1985)

"You just have to say these things over and over again, so people hear them. People are dying again. People who have been healthy and on the drugs are dying of AIDS now. I want to get the word out."

— Playwright Larry Kramer (2011)

March 25, 2026 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced a one-night-only reading of **Larry Kramer's THE NORMAL HEART** in honor of the groundbreaking play's 40th anniversary. **Tony Kushner** will direct the benefit reading on **Monday, April 27 at 7:00 p.m.** in The Public's Barbaralee Theater (formerly the Anspacher Theater), where the original production moved for an extended run after the play's world premiere in the LuEsther Hall. The original production is the longest-running play ever produced at The Public.

THE NORMAL HEART premiered in The Public's LuEsther Hall in April 1985, directed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg and featuring David Allen Brooks, Brad Davis, D. W. Moffett, and Concetta Tomei. The production moved to The Public's Anspacher Theater for an additional seven months, where Joel Grey later joined the cast. The play returned to The Public in 2004 for the Worth Street Theater Company's production directed by David Esbjornson, featuring Raúl Esparza, Joanna Gleason, and Lisa Kron. Twenty-six years after its world premiere, **THE NORMAL HEART** made its Broadway debut in 2011 with a Tony Award-winning production directed by Joel Grey and George C. Wolfe and featuring Ellen Barkin, John Benjamin Hickey, Luke MacFarlane, Joe Mantello, Lee Pace, and Jim Parsons.

Gail Merrifield Papp, former director of The Public's New Plays & Musicals Development alongside her husband, founder **Joseph Papp**, was an early and adamant advocate for the project before serving as the first production's dramaturg. As she writes in her 2023 memoir, *Public/Private: My Life with Joe Papp at The Public Theater*, "Putting myself on the artistic line with Joe was a nerve-wracking business. I wasn't shielded from his stern verdict about the worthiness of a play any more than anyone else was. I felt confident about *The Normal Heart*, however, not because it was timely or political, but because it had made me cry, something that rarely happened when I read a play."

In Kenneth Turan's *Free For All*, Papp said, "Here was a play that I felt was dealing with a major crisis, putting us in touch with the world again, and I was very proud to do it. I told the cast, 'Once in every ten years or so, a play comes along that fulfills my original idea of what role theater must play in society.'"

Benefit tickets for **THE NORMAL HEART** reading start at \$400. Proceeds from this benefit will support The Public and God's Love We Deliver, founded to support people with HIV/AIDS and now providing medically tailored meals, nutrition care, and education to individuals living with serious illness.

Benefit tickets are available online at publictheater.org or via email at events@publictheater.org. A limited number of \$40 tickets will be available via lottery.

Casting and more information will be available closer to the benefit date.

The Public is currently mounting the world premiere production of **ANTIGONE (THIS PLAY I READ IN HIGH SCHOOL)** by **Anna Ziegler** and directed by **Tyne Rafaeli** while Ma-Yi Theater Company's season-long residency continues with the world premiere of **JESA** by **Jeena Yi** and directed by **Mei Ann Teo**. Simultaneously, **PUBLIC CHARGE** is in the Newman, a world premiere play based on true events by former United States Ambassador **Julissa Reynoso** and award-winning playwright **Michael J. Chepiga**. Finally, the 25-26 Astor Place season will conclude with the much-anticipated world premiere of **GIRL, INTERRUPTED** based on the memoir by **Susanna Kaysen**, with a book by **Martyna Majok**, original music by **Aimee Mann**, choreography by **Sonya Tayeh**, and direction by **Jo Bonney**.

Free Shakespeare in the Park returns to the newly revitalized Delacorte Theater this summer with **ROMEO AND JULIET**, directed by Public Theater Associate Artistic Director Saheem Ali, and **THE WINTER'S TALE** directed by Delacorte veteran **Daniel Sullivan**. Shakespeare will be shared across the five boroughs with Mobile Unit's **AS YOU LIKE IT**, directed by **Emma Rosa Went**.

The Library serves food and drink beginning at 5:00 p.m. and closing at midnight. The Library is closed on Mondays. For more information, visit publictheater.org.

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 Works, 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. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 64 Tony Awards, 197 Obie Awards, 62 Drama Desk Awards, 64 Lortel Awards, 36 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, 72 AUDELCO Awards, 6 Antonyo Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. publictheater.org

The Public Theater stands in honor of the first inhabitants and our ancestors. We acknowledge the land on which The Public and its theaters stand—the original homeland of the Lenape people. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory. We honor the generations of stewards and we pay our respects to the many diverse indigenous peoples still connected to this land.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets are now onsale and can be accessed by visiting publictheater.org, emailing events@publictheater.org, calling **212.539.8694**, or in person at the Taub Box Office at The Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street.

The full performance calendar can be found at publictheater.org.

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