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THE BIPOC CRITICS LAB BECOMES BI-COASTAL WITH PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE PUBLIC THEATER AND THE OLD GLOBE; APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN FOR 2026-27 BIPOC CRITICS LAB COHORT

2025-26 Cohort Members Complete Program

May 13, 2026 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) and The Old Globe (Erna Finci Viterbi Artistic Director, Barry Edelstein; Audrey S. Geisel Managing Director, Timothy J. Shields) have announced today that they will be co-hosting cultural critic **Jose Solís' BIPOC Critics Lab** during the theaters' 2026-27 season with a joint cohort, which will mark the program's first bi-coastal cohort. Following three successful years of the program, The Public is honored to continue Solís' commitment to creating an educational space for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) writers in the realm of cultural criticism. Partnering with the renowned Old Globe across the country will allow the opportunity for even more individuals to be impacted by this program's ability to jumpstart their careers in arts journalism. Applications are now open for the upcoming cohort and applicants who reside within a commutable distance to each theater will be eligible for consideration.

"When I created the BIPOC Critics Lab in 2020, I wanted to build the kind of room many of us had been left out of, a space where critics of color could be met with care and real opportunity," shares program founder **Jose Solís**. "To see that room become a movement and now grow into a bi-coastal partnership between The Public Theater and The Old Globe, fills me with enormous pride and awe. At a moment when the value of diversity is being questioned in so many cultural spaces, this expansion affirms something I have always believed: American theater is richer, sharper, and more alive when more of us get to help shape how it is seen and remembered."

Alumni from the BIPOC Critics Lab have gone on to hold freelance posts and editorial positions at many notable outlets including *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *TDF Stages*, *American Theatre*, *3Views*, *The Hat*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *Elle*, and more.

"The Old Globe is thrilled to collaborate with our colleagues at The Public Theater on this first-ever bi-coastal partnership co-hosting **Jose Solís' BIPOC Critics Lab**," said **Erna Finci Viterbi Artistic Director Barry Edelstein**. "We value the vital role drama critics and arts journalists play in shaping how the theatre community's work is seen and understood—through features, reviews, and thoughtful coverage

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that interprets and amplifies the work on our stages. Together with The Public, we will support, develop, and invest in the next generation of BIPOC arts journalists and theatre critics, and help to ensure that they have meaningful opportunities, strong networks, and the platforms necessary to share their work with the world. Their voices contribute to a broader cultural conversation that reinforces the Globe's mission to make theater matter beyond our stage, both in Southern California and across the nation.”

Sessions for the Lab will span the course of The Public and The Old Globe's 2026-2027 season, with the primary instruction to take place on Zoom during the fall and in-person opportunities at both theaters throughout the spring. Those chosen to participate will receive offers to join the cohort in August, with the cohort kicking off in early September. For more information on this iteration of the BIPOC Critics Lab and to apply, visit publictheater.org. The deadline to apply is **Wednesday, June 24**.

The Public has long operated on the principles that theater is an essential cultural force and that art and culture belong to everyone. Hosting the BIPOC Critics Lab at The Public for a fourth season aligns directly with the goals outlined in The Public's Cultural Transformation Plan, acknowledging that the field of arts journalism and the theater industry have historically upheld white supremacy, and, as a result, critics of color have far too often been left out of the conversation. In parallel, The Old Globe's commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and access is deeply embedded in its mission to create theater that reflects and serves its community, as well as in its ongoing Social Justice Roadmap. By investing in programs that uplift historically underrepresented voices and challenge systemic inequities within the field, the Globe affirms its role as a civic institution dedicated to cultural transformation. Together, these aligned values underscore a shared investment in expanding who gets to shape critical discourse and ensuring a more inclusive and representative American theater.

Additionally, The Public is pleased to announce that 12 members have successfully completed their training for the BIPOC Critics Lab over the past year. These writers are **Anna Aguiar Kosicki, Serena Arora, Artel Great, Branden Janese, Timiki Salinas, Ankita Sharma, Julia Wojciechowska, Isaac Woon, Yashmita, Melvin Ningyao Yen, Hope Yoon, and Rohan Zhou-Lee**. In addition to their writing, these cohort members bring expertise in film, acting, music, visual arts curation, politics, storytelling, movement and dance, costume and set production, accessibility, photography, video games, and arts organizing. These writers are passionate and eager to join the cultural conversation in both New York City and beyond. To add these individuals to your press lists, please email BIPOCCriticsLab@publictheater.org to receive their contact information.

“This past cohort reminded me how expansive the future of criticism already is,” shares Solís. “Our Lab members joined us from South Korea, Taiwan, Poland, Latin America, and Black diasporic backgrounds, bringing with them practices shaped by dance, cinema, theater, poetry, and other artistic forms. I was moved by the way their artistic languages and lived experiences entered into conversation with one another. Together, they expanded what criticism can sound like and what it can make possible.”

In a continued effort to further the movement initiated by Jose Solís and to expand both past and present cohorts' networks, The Public welcomes theaters in New York City, arts and cultural press agencies, and regional theaters around the world to collaborate with the Lab's early career BIPOC journalists for future commissioning opportunities. Institutions are also invited to host their own cohort of the BIPOC Critics Lab to expand the number of opportunities. To learn more, please email BIPOCCriticsLab@publictheater.org.

BIOS:

ANNA AGUIAR KOSICKI lives and works in Chicago. They write and edit essays, stage manage plays,

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fight for abortion access, and have too many hobbies. They are also a researcher and fact checker. Their critical work has appeared in *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Protean Magazine*, *Momus*, and *The New Inquiry*, where they also served as an Editor.

SERENA ARORA is a New York–based actor, playwright, and writer dedicated to spotlighting underrepresented voices. A Boston University graduate, she recently completed training at the Atlantic Acting Conservatory. Her one-woman show, *House of Vanvas*, is in development for an upcoming workshop. She will soon publish her first theater criticism piece with *3Views*. Her creative range is also showcased in her poetry novel, *The Beast Within*, and debut EP, *Painted Blind*.

ARTEL GREAT is an Independent Spirit Award-nominated filmmaker, writer, and cultural critic whose work explores the politics, poetics, and possibilities of Black film and visual culture. He holds the George & Judy Marcus Endowed Chair in African American Cinema Studies at San Francisco State University, and has written on Black film and culture across national media. He is the author of *The Black Pack: Comedy, Race, and Resistance* (Rutgers University Press), which has garnered critical and commercial acclaim.

BRANDEN JANESE is a writer, facilitator, and curator based in New York City. Janese's writing has been awarded grants, residencies, and fellowships from NYSCA, NYFA, NYC Mayor's Office, and more. She's been published in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Complex*, *Interview*, *Flaunt*, *LADYGUNN*, and elsewhere. Her podcast *Sick Empire* ('21) reached #46 on Apple's Top 100. She curates and hosts literary social events under the name Public Pages.

TIMIKI SALINAS is a theater/film artist deeply interested in physical storytelling. He is a company member of The American Mime Theatre and a co-founder of The Bellwether Project, an anti-hierarchical arts collective that creates work using the principles of radical nuance and radical joy. Education: Carnegie Mellon University.

ANKITA SHARMA is an experimental choreographer and writer invested in storytelling where content dictates genre and betrays expectation. They are a writer and editor at *thINKing DANCE* and have published essays, academic writing, reviews, and more. They are also an administrator for notable arts organizations and regularly present their performance work (inter)nationally. Throughout these different capacities, Sharma remains dedicated to unpacking systems of power from a queer, punk lens that rehearses freedom in body and mind.

JULIA WOJCIECHOWSKA is a Polish-born and raised theater practitioner with a background in set and costume production. She holds an MA in Performance Studies from NYU Tisch School of the Arts and has recently been accepted as a doctoral candidate for the Theatre and Performance program at CUNY. Her research lies at the intersection of performance, labor, and material culture, with particular attention to the politics of visibility and the poetics of craft. Drawing from a professional background in international stage work, she explores how embodied labor informs performative environments and backstage economies. She's honored to have been a part of this year's cohort and to have engaged in critical writing and analysis that deepened and grew thanks to Lab's dear colleagues and mentors.

ISAAC WOON is a multidisciplinary artist exploring humorous nightmares of modernity. His debut play *Pointless* was a winner of the 2024 New South Young Playwrights Festival in Atlanta, Georgia, and his visual work has been exhibited at Brooklyn venues including Godspeed Studios. His essay "On Loving Where You're From" received a Standout Selection award and was published in *The Olivetree*

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Review. He currently works as an Assistant General Manager of the Finborough Theatre in London.

YASHMITA (she/her) is a visual artist and writer whose criticism explores cinema and visual culture through the lens of South Asian and diasporic experiences. Dedicated to uplifting underrepresented voices, her practice centers on queer life, belonging, and community-building, bringing a vital new perspective to cultural criticism and creative storytelling.

MELVIN NINGYAO YEN (all pronouns) is a New York-based Taiwanese cultural critic, playwright, and theater maker. A member of The Public Theater's 2025–26 BIPOC Critics Lab, they have held fellowships at Lincoln Center, Manhattan Theatre Club, and Playwrights Horizons. Their criticism, poetry, and essays appear on HowlRound and their Substack, *The Ritual of Seeing*, alongside a broader practice spanning theater-making, photography, and interdisciplinary writing.

HOPE YOON is a writer and translator from Seoul working across fiction, theater, and video games. She is a winner of fiction prizes at Columbia Journal and Driftwood Press, and has a novel translation forthcoming with New Directions in 2027. Alum of Soho Rep's Writer/Director Lab and the BIPOC Critics Lab at The Public Theater. Yoon works as a facilitator at the Strother School of Radical Attention and as a video game writer at LINE Games. BA: Comparative Literature, Stanford University.

ROHAN ZHOU-LEE is an international writer, dancer, and arts organizer. In 2023, they became the first Black Asian Open City Fellow at the Asian American Writers' Workshop. Bylines include *Newsweek*, *Hyperallergic*, and more. They have spoken at Harvard University, New York University, The University of Tokyo, and more. Performances include *Sandra | Song* at the 2025 Enough Festival in Zürich, Switzerland; *Over Here!* (Off-Broadway debut); and trumpet, Soundcake Orchestra at Lincoln Center. Gender: Firebird. www.diaryofafirebird.com



Anna Aguiar Kosicki



Serena Arora



Artel Great



Branden Janese



Timiki Salinas



Ankita Sharma



Julia Wojciechowska



Isaac Woon



Yashmita



Melvin Ningyao Yen



Hope Yoon



Rohan Zhou-Lee

ABOUT THE BIPOC CRITICS LAB

The BIPOC Critics Lab was founded in 2020 by Jose Solís as a first-of-its-kind program designed to train and create work by emerging BIPOC theater journalists. Solís noticed a gap in training based on his own experience as a cultural critic in the field and created an educational space for BIPOC writers who had not been welcomed into cultural criticism, whether due to systemic oppression, lack of opportunity, or because they didn't know they were allowed to see themselves as critics. Solís solicited applicants for the first cohort through Twitter where over 100 BIPOC participants expressed interest in participating. From 2021-2023,

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The Kennedy Center hosted the BIPOC Critics Lab online as a part of the American College Theater Festival. In the summer of 2023, a cohort was also co-hosted by the Stratford Festival and *Intermission Magazine*. During its 2023-2024 season, The Public Theater hosted its first BIPOC Critics Lab cohort. Alumni of the program have gone on to write and work as editors for outlets such as *The Los Angeles Times*, *Andscape*, *Elle*, *Glamour*, *American Theatre*, *Broadway News*, *3Views*, *Brooklyn Rail*, and *Token Theatre Friends*.

Following the tenets of dialogue, compassion, and nurturing one's unique voice, future critics who participate in the cohort will contribute to the creation of a custom program that fits their specific needs and encourages them to pursue the path of criticism that best serves them. Participating in the cohort is at no cost to members. Selected members will have the opportunity to learn all aspects of arts journalism through a variety of mediums beyond the written word. BIPOC experts in the field also serve as guest speakers for the Lab. Writers who meet the attendance requirements at the culmination of the program will be assigned a future commissioned piece with compensation.

Since its creation, The Public has been committed to the work of the BIPOC Critics Lab, commissioning all current and alumni writers to pen features for most productions. Past commissions from former BIPOC Critics Lab members can be read at publictheater.org.

ABOUT JOSE SOLÍS

Jose Solís is a cultural critic, educator, editor, and founder of the BIPOC Critics Lab, a program he created in 2020 to train and mentor the cultural critics of the future. His work has appeared at *Common Sense Media*, *The National Catholic Reporter*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Toronto Star*, *American Theatre*, *TDF Stages*, *Backstage*, *Salon*, and *America Magazine*. He is a Rotten Tomatoes-approved critic and a member of the Online Film Critics Society, GALECA, LEJA, and FIPRESCI, where he is the first and only member from Honduras.

In 2020, he was selected as the Floria Lasky Visiting Artist at Hunter College, where he hosted the Wed@One series. In 2021, he was named one of the Kennedy Center's Next 50 and served as cohort director for DidTheyLikelt.com. He also restructured and co-edited *3Views*.

Solís is co-facilitator of Page Turn, a Canadian professional development program for emerging critics, and producer of The Page Turn Podcast. He co-created YouAreACritic.com, a free online course designed to make criticism more democratic.

In 2024, he completed an MA at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, studying the lack of cultural diversity in Spain's cultural journalism. He is currently pursuing PhD work researching the pedagogy of care he created for the BIPOC Critics Lab.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER

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

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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, 66 Lortel Awards, 36 Outer Critics 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.

The Public also gives our respect to the people of Seneca Village, a community of Black property owners who were removed from their land and whose village was destroyed in the creation of Central Park. We recognize the sacrifice that these ancestors made and honor Seneca Village's legacy.

ABOUT THE OLD GLOBE

The Tony Award–winning The Old Globe is one of the country's leading professional nonprofit regional theatres. Now in its 91st year, the Globe is San Diego's flagship performing arts institution, and it serves a vibrant community by creating theatre that lives beyond the stage. Under the leadership of Erna Finci Viterbi Artistic Director Barry Edelstein and Audrey S. Geisel Managing Director Timothy J. Shields, The Old Globe produces a year-round season of 16 productions of classic, contemporary, and new works on its three Balboa Park stages. The company's Summer Shakespeare Festival is internationally renowned, and in 2024 the Globe completed the Shakespeare canon with Edelstein's landmark production *Henry 6*, which received the San Diego Theatre Critics Circle's 2024 Craig Noel Award for "Outstanding New Play." More than 250,000 people annually attend Globe productions and participate in the theatre's artistic and arts engagement programs. Its nationally prominent Arts Engagement Department provides an array of participatory programs that make theatre matter to more people in neighborhoods throughout the region. Humanities programs at the Globe and around the city broaden the community's understanding of theatre art in all its forms. The Globe also boasts a range of new play development programs with professional and community-based writers, as well as the renowned The Old Globe and University of San Diego Shiley Graduate Theatre Program. Numerous world premieres—such as 2014 Tony Award winner for Best Musical *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, *Bright Star*, *The Full Monty*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, and *Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*—have been developed at The Old Globe and have gone on to highly successful runs on Broadway and at regional theatres across the country.

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