

# THE PUBLIC.



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press@publictheater.org

## PRESS KIT

# MINNESOTA PROTEST ACCOUNTS BECOME PUBLIC FORUM *CITIES UNDER SIEGE* AT THE DELACORTE THEATER ON MONDAY, JUNE 29

**Free One-Night-Only Event from Jessica Blank & Erik Jensen**  
**Featuring Erika Alexander, Will Brill, Garret Dillahunt, Isabella Star LaBlanc, Marjan Neshat, Kate Nowlin, John Ortiz, Mohamed Salad, Miriam Silverman, and Connie Shi**

June 18, 2026 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham), and Public Forum series curators Alexa Smith and Jeremy McCarter, proudly announces **CITIES UNDER SIEGE** on **Monday, June 29 at 8:00 p.m.** at The Delacorte Theater in Central Park.

The arrival of an estimated 3,000 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in Minnesota—dubbed Operation Metro Surge—began a period of significant civic unrest with far-reaching impact on public safety, law enforcement, the local economy and workforce, education, and the daily lives of Minnesotans. In January 2026, The Public Theater and the Guthrie Theater partnered to commission acclaimed documentary theater artists **Jessica Blank** and **Erik Jensen** to capture firsthand interviews, begin in-depth engagement with affected communities, and embark on the creation of a new play, **THE SURGE**, featuring Minnesotans' real experiences. This special Forum evening will feature excerpts from this urgent work in progress and discussion around how cities and civilians respond in moments of crisis. The one-night-only event will feature **Erika Alexander, Will Brill, Garret Dillahunt, Isabella Star LaBlanc, Marjan Neshat, Kate Nowlin, John Ortiz, Mohamed Salad, Miriam Silverman, and Connie Shi**.

Public Theater Artistic Director **Oskar Eustis** shares, "The theater isn't always the best place for the latest new, or rapid reaction to history. But sometimes history demands an urgent 'now!' Minneapolis and its extraordinary citizens are making history in the eyes of the world, and we at The Public and The Guthrie want to do everything we can to honor and lift up what they are accomplishing."

Playwrights **Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen** say, "When poet and mother of three Renee Good was killed, we realized we couldn't sit still anymore. There had been other incidents and signs that, as the tempo of the ICE invasion increased, a terrible tragedy like this was coming. You could feel it in the winter air. To do nothing, to say nothing, we felt would, in some way, make us complicit. We needed to fight back with words. With truths. And we wanted to understand the remarkable resistance that (for a moment) had flummoxed the powers that be. Most of all we wanted to paint a portrait of what neighbors do for each other in a city under siege. That care for one another can overwhelm hate. This work in progress is, we hope, a small step in a pathway to achieving that goal. And it's a punch in the nose...to whom, we'll leave to you."

Monday evenings, typically the night off from The Public's Free Shakespeare in the Park performances, will now feature the revival of the **PUBLIC FORUM** series. The series will feature a distinctive mix of

performance and conversation and a focus on American voices on this year's 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Free tickets will be made available on each Public Forum date via the line at The Delacorte, evening Standby at The Delacorte, digital lottery with TodayTix, and an in-person lottery at The Public. For more information, visit [publictheater.org](http://publictheater.org).

## **PUBLIC FORUMS**

### **DIVISION AND RENEWAL: AN EVENING WITH MICHAEL SANDEL**

**August 10**

American society has rarely been more polarized. How did we reach this moment of crisis, and what can any of us do to repair what has been broken? **Michael Sandel**, the Harvard professor and globally acclaimed “rock-star philosopher,” will return to The Delacorte Theater for a night of public philosophy, engaging an audience of New Yorkers in a spirited conversation about meritocracy, dignity, and where we go from here.

### **SUMMER BOOK CLUB CELEBRATION WITH THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**August 17**

Calling all New Yorkers! As part of its annual Summer at the Library programming, **The New York Public Library**, in partnership with The Public Theater, invites New Yorkers to join a summer book club and read **N.K. Jemisin's** *The City We Became* together. The book club will culminate in a marquee event at The Delacorte Theater featuring readings, commissioned performances, and public conversation inspired by and celebrating the book.

## **BIOS**

**ERIKA ALEXANDER SAG** and Independent Spirit Award-nominated Erika Alexander is beloved for her iconic roles as Maxine Shaw (“Living Single”), Detective Latoya (*Get Out*), and Cousin Pam (“The Cosby Show”)—actress, activist, entrepreneur, creator, producer, and director. Currently starring in NBC’s “The Fall and Rise of Reggie Dinkins” alongside Tracy Morgan and Daniel Radcliffe—for which she is a Gotham TV Award nominee for Best Supporting Actor and recipient of IndieWire’s Maverick Award—she also stars in *Is God Is*, written and directed by Aleshea Harris, for Orion, and *American Fiction*, directed by Cord Jefferson, which won the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay and received five Oscar nominations including Best Picture. She also starred in Jordan Peele’s *Get Out*. Notably, Alexander has starred in the debut feature films of three of the most consequential writer-directors of her generation: Jordan Peele (*Get Out*), Cord Jefferson (*American Fiction*), and Aleshea Harris (*Is God Is*).

**JESSICA BLANK AND ERIK JENSEN** are a multihyphenate, married creative team whom *The New Yorker* calls “the foremost practitioners of documentary theater in the U.S.” Documentary theater is a medium that unites journalistic best practices with the emotional power of the well-made play, creating a forum in which pressing true stories can be told with much more depth and complexity than most media allows. Blank and Jensen have spent over two decades creating documentary theater that wrestles with the most urgent issues of our time while circumventing the false polarization that too often diminishes our national dialogue and blinds us to the human experience behind the headlines. Their work includes *The Exonerated*, a play based on interviews with death row exonerees across the U.S.; *Aftermath*, the first major American theatrical work to tackle the impact of the Iraq war on ordinary civilians; *Coal Country*, based on interviews with survivors of the 2010 Upper Big Branch Mine disaster; *The Line*, a rapid-response documentary play based on interviews with New York City medical first responders at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic; and numerous others. Though currently based in New York, both artists have deep Minnesota roots and a strong personal connection to the state. Jensen was born in Detroit Lakes and grew up all over northern Minnesota before attending high school in Apple Valley. Blank came to the Twin Cities to attend Macalester College, then the University of Minnesota, and lived in Minneapolis before moving to

New York. They maintain artistic ties to the Twin Cities; their most recent feature film, *Brooklyn, Minnesota*, starring Jensen and Amy Madigan, was filmed in and around Minneapolis in 2023 with a Minnesota creative team and crew. The film won the 2024 Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival (MSPIFF).

**WILL BRILL** is an acclaimed, Tony Award-winning stage and screen actor. In 2024, Will won the Tony Award for Best Featured Actor in a Play for *Stereophonic*. This play with music—which won five Tony Awards overall including Best Play from a record-setting 13 nominations—is set in a music studio in 1976 where an up-and-coming rock band is recording a new album, finding themselves suddenly on the cusp of superstardom. Featuring original music by Arcade Fire’s Will Butler, Brill portrayed Reg, the band’s volatile but deeply insightful bassist. For his performance, he also received a Drama Desk Award for Best Ensemble alongside the cast. This season, Brill was the one of the leads in *Meet the Cartozians*, a *New York Times*’ Critic’s Pick written by Talene Monahan and directed by David Cromer. The play features two distinct acts highlighting the plight of Armenian-Americans first in 1924, then 2024.

**GARRET DILLAHUNT** will recur on HBO’s DC series “Lanterns” and Netflix’s “Tires” Season 3. His upcoming film work includes starring roles in *Bloodwood* (dir. Robert Menzies) and *Archangel* (dir. William Eubank), as well as appearances in *Hal* (dir. Mark Williams) and *Evil Genius* (dir. Courteney Cox). On stage, he recently starred in the world premiere of *Shit. Meet. Fan.* at MCC Theater. His recent television credits include “High Potential” (ABC), “Hysteria” (Peacock), “Hightown” (Starz), and “Ghosts of Beirut” (Showtime), and he co-created, starred in, and executive produced “Sprung” for Freevee. Film credits include *The Dead Don’t Hurt*, *Red Right Hand*, *A Million Miles Away*, *Gray Matter*, *Where the Crawdads Sing*, *Ambulance*, and *Army of the Dead*.

**ISABELLA STAR LABLANC** is a Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota actress. She has been seen starring in the 19-time Emmy nominated “True Detective: Night Country” for HBO. Other film/TV credits include “Pet Sematary: Bloodlines” (Paramount+), “Dexter: Resurrection” (Paramount/Showtime), and “Long Slow Exhale” (Paramount/Spectrum). Onstage, LaBlanc has been seen at The Guthrie Theater, The Shakespeare Theatre Company, Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, Jungle Theater, Mixed Blood Theatre, and Children’s Theater Company, among others. LaBlanc has been honored with the Yale Misty Upham Award, Princess Grace Honoraria, and is a three-time Audie Award Finalist.

**MARJAN NESHAT** Broadway: *English* (Tony nomination, Best Featured Actress; Theater World Award for Outstanding Broadway Debut). Off Broadway: *English* (Drama Desk/Sam Norkin Award winner, Obie Award), *Wish You Were Here* (Playwrights Horizons), *Selling Kabul* (Drama Desk Award), *Sandra* (Vineyard Theatre), *Julius Caesar* (The Public). Select TV and Film: “The Night Agent,” “Bull,” “Law and Order,” “Quantico,” “Elementary,” “Person of Interest,” *Rockaway*, *Robocop*, *Sex in the City 2*, *Almost in Love*, *Cry Funny Happy* (Sundance).

**KATE NOWLIN** A filmmaker and actor, Nowlin appeared at The Public in Suzan-Lori Parks’ *Sally & Tom*, originating roles of Patsy/Ginger. Her first co-created feature film, *Blood Stripe*, won the LAFF Jury Award. Followed by her award-winning grant-funded short film, *Lemon Shark*. Nowlin’s next feature film *Come Back Kidd* marks her feature directorial debut and will be made in Minneapolis. Nowlin’s film and TV credits include working with directors Craig Zobel, Jason Reitman, and Miguel Arteta.

**JOHN ORTIZ** is currently starring on Broadway in *Dog Day Afternoon*. He recently directed the world premiere of Stephen Adly Guirgis’ *Halfway Bitches Go Straight to Heaven* (LAByrnth/ATC), and served as Co-Artistic Director with Philip Seymour Hoffman of LAByrnth Theater Company during their residence at The Public. Stage: The Public: *References to Salvador Dalí Make Me Hot*, *The Skin of our Teeth*, *¿De Donde?* The Public/LAByrnth co-pro: *Othello*, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, *Guinea Pig Solo*. LAByrnth: *Jack Goes Boating*, *Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train*, *Where’s My Money*, *Moonlight Mile*, *Divine Horsemen*. Film: *American Fiction*, *Silver Linings Playbook*, *Ad Astra*, *Dogs Purpose*, *American Gangster*, *Miami Vice*, *Pride and Glory*, *Narc*, *Steve Jobs*, *FF 4&6*, *Going in Style*, *Nostalgia*, *Skull Island*, etc.

**MOHAMED SALAD** is a filmmaker, producer, and writer based in Minneapolis, founder of Mawimbi Studios and the Diaspora Arts Foundation, and creative director at Split Second Productions. His work explores Somali and East African identity through an Afro-futurist lens, spanning film, poetry, and brand storytelling. He is currently completing a graduate degree in Strategic Communications at the University of Minnesota.

**CONNIE SHI** is an award-winning actor, writer, director, and songwriter from Bucks County, PA. She's recurred on TV shows like NBC's "Law & Order: Organized Crime," HBO's "Betty," and Netflix's "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt" and has also appeared on "NCIS New Orleans," "God Friended Me," "And Just Like That," "The Village," "Everything's Trash," and "FBI." She can next be seen in Hulu's *The Binge 2* and the independent features *Wine Club* and *Molli & Max in the Future* opposite Zosia Mamet. Shi is also the creator of *Project:Girl*, a film series inspired by true stories of girlhood, working to eliminate shame surrounding the female experience. Her TV pilot "Young Woman," based on the series, was a Semi-Finalist for the 2020 Sundance Episodic Lab. Her most recent film *Natural Disasters* won the Audience Award for Best Women's Short at Out on Film Festival, one of the oldest LGBTQ festivals in the US.

**MIRIAM SILVERMAN** Select Theater: *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (Tony and Drama Desk winner); *The Disappear* (Audible Theater); *Junk* (Lincoln Center); *Anatomy of a Suicide* (Atlantic Theater Company); and Clubbed Thumb productions of *Deep Blue Sound*, *Plano*, and *Find Me Here*. TV: "Your Friends and Neighbors" (Apple TV), "Landman" (Paramount+), "Vladimir" (Netflix), "The Night Agent" (Netflix), "Dead Ringers" (Amazon), "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" (Amazon), "Fleishman is in Trouble" (Hulu). Film: *Motherland*, *Breaking* and the upcoming *Sacrifice* for Romain Gavras. This fall, Silverman will star in *The Verge* for The Public/Fiasco 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 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, 63 Drama Desk Awards, 66 Lortel Awards, 36 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, 72 AUDELCO Awards, 6 Antonyo Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. <http://www.publictheater.org/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.

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