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press@publictheater.org



Ra'Mya Latiah Aikens



Sergio Mauritz Ang



Daniel Bravo Hernández



Andrés Nicolás Chaves



Rachel Crowl



Caleb Joshua Eberhardt



Francis Jue



Ariyan Kassam



LaChanze



Deirdre O'Connell



Jason Manuel Olazábal



Okieriete Onaodowan



Jessica Pimentel



Mariand Torres



Marlon Xavier

PRESS KIT

**THE PUBLIC THEATER
ANNOUNCES CASTING FOR
FREE SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK'S
*ROMEO & JULIET***

By William Shakespeare
Directed by Saheem Ali

Cast Includes Ra'Mya Latiah Aikens, Sergio Mauritz Ang, Daniel Bravo Hernández, Andrés Nicolás Chaves, Rachel Crowl, Caleb Joshua Eberhardt, Francis Jue, Ariyan Kassam, LaChanze, Deirdre O'Connell, Jason Manuel Olazábal, Okieriete Onaodowan, Jessica Pimentel, Mariand Torres, and Marlon Xavier

March 19, 2026 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced today initial casting for the Free Shakespeare in the Park production of **ROMEO**

& JULIET at The Delacorte Theater in Central Park. Directed by Associate Artistic Director and Resident Director **Saheem Ali**, this will mark the first time in nearly 20 years the story of star-crossed lovers will captivate Free Shakespeare in the Park audiences. Beginning performances on Friday, May 22, the production will run through Sunday, June 28 with an official press opening on Thursday, June 11. **Jerome L. Greene Foundation**, lead sponsor, and **Citizens**, presenting partner, return as supporters of **FREE SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK**.

Never was there a story of more woe, or more romance, than the Bard's timeless tale of two young lovers from warring families. As the Montagues and Capulets are torn apart by ideology and simmering violence spills into the streets of the border town of Verona, Romeo and Juliet dare to defy a world determined to keep them apart. In this bold new staging, the play unfolds in English, but Romeo and Juliet speak to one another in Spanish, a language reserved only for their shared world.

"While *Romeo & Juliet* endures as one of the greatest love stories ever told, it is equally a cautionary tale about the devastating consequences of division within a society. We are living through an extraordinary and painful moment, witnessing the loss of our fellow citizens as we wage war over the very question of who belongs in America," said director **Saheem Ali**. "Shakespeare has something urgent and heartbreaking to say about how the young and innocent become collateral in wars they did not choose. I am thrilled to bring this play back to The Delacorte for only the third time in our 64-year history, in a production that puts Spanish language at the heart of the lovers' story."

ROMEO & JULIET will feature **Ra'Mya Latiah Aikens** (*Juliet*), **Sergio Mauritz Ang** (*Friar John/Ensemble*), **Daniel Bravo Hernández** (*Romeo*), **Andrés Nicolás Chaves** (*Ensemble*), **Rachel Crowl** (*Apothecary/Ensemble*), **Caleb Joshua Eberhardt** (*Mercutio*), **Francis Jue** (*Friar Laurence*), **Ariyan Kassam** (*Tybalt*), **LaChanze** (*Lady Capulet*), **Deirdre O'Connell** (*Nurse*), **Jason Manuel Olazábal** (*Lord Montague*), **Okieriete Onaodowan** (*Benvolio*), **Jessica Pimentel** (*Escalus*), **Mariand Torres** (*Lady Montague*), and **Marlon Xavier** (*Ensemble*). Additional casting will be announced at a later date.

ROMEO & JULIET will feature scenic design by **Maruti Evans**, costume design by **Oana Botez**, lighting design by **Christopher Akerlind**, sound design by **Mike Tracey**, prop management by **Jessica Zivny**, original music composition by **Michael Thurber**, hair and wig design by **Krystal Balleza**, fight direction by **Thomas Schall**, and intimacy direction by **Kelsey Rainwater**. **Kamra Jacobs** will serve as production stage manager and **Benjamin E. C. Pfister** and **Giselle Andrea Raphaela** as stage managers.

Shakespeare's classic story of star-crossed lovers has been presented at The Delacorte Theater only twice before. In 1968, Public Theater founder Joseph Papp directed Martin Sheen as Romeo and Susan McArthur as Juliet. Not staged again at The Delacorte for almost 40 years, the 2007 production was directed by Michael Greif and starred Oscar Isaac as Romeo and Lauren Ambrose as Juliet.

ABOUT FREE SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK

Since its inception, over six million people have enjoyed more than 160 free productions of Shakespeare and other classical works and musicals at The Delacorte Theater in Central Park. Conceived by founder Joseph Papp to make great theater accessible to all, Free Shakespeare in the Park continues to be the bedrock of The Public's vision of artistic excellence and free access to culture.

The Public launched "Forever Public," an ambitious, multi-year capital campaign with a goal of raising over \$175 million to secure the transformative mission of free theater for everyone. In addition to establishing the Fund for Free Theater endowment, Forever Public provided capital support to make the Delacorte revitalization possible.

Built in 1962, the theater had not undergone meaningful capital upgrades since 1999. The Public, in partnership with the Central Park Conservancy, NYC Parks, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and Ennead Architects, created a design and construction plan that minimized impact on Central

Park and foregrounded resilience and sustainability to ensure the longevity of Free Shakespeare in the Park for many years to come.

Following groundbreaking in October 2023, reconstruction of interior spaces and the grandstand layout began with subsequent installation of redesigned lighting towers and the new wood façade made from salvaged NYC water towers. Concurrently, the Central Park Conservancy renovated the Delacorte Restroom. The revitalized Delacorte reopened in summer 2025 and offers a state-of-the-art experience for audiences, artists, and staff alike with improved access for people living with disabilities.

BIOS

SAHEEM ALI (*Director*) is a proud immigrant from Kenya, currently serving as the Associate Artistic Director/ Resident Director of New York's Public Theater. He is a two-time Tony Award nominee, for *Buena Vista Social Club* and *Fat Ham*, the latter of which also earned the Joe A. Callaway Award and Drama Desk and Lucille Lortel nominations. He is the recipient of an Obie Award for Sustained Excellence in Directing. His productions of *Twelfth Night* and *Merry Wives* (Free Shakespeare in the Park) were recorded for PBS' "Great Performances," and *Merry Wives* as the subject of the HBO documentary *Reopening Night*. Productions include *Goddess* (The Public Theater, Berkeley Rep), *Good Bones* (The Public Theater), *Nollywood Dreams* (MCC), *Fires in the Mirror* (Signature Theatre), *The Rolling Stone* (Lincoln Center Theater), *Passage* (Soho Rep), and *Sugar in Our Wounds* (MTC). He is a Sir John Gielgud SDCF Fellow and a Shubert Fellow.

RA'MYA LATIAH AIKENS she/her (*Juliet*) graduated from NYU's Acting MFA program in 2025. Recent credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Classical Theatre of Harlem) and *One Night Only* (Universal Pictures). Featured in last year's Disney Discovers Talent Showcase, Aikens is a trained singer and originally from Georgia. For her family, friends, and cohort. For anyone grieving. For mama, forever.

SERGIO MAURITZ ANG he/they (*Friar John/Ensemble*). Public Theater debut. Select theater includes *Pride and Prejudice* (Hartford Stage) and *Far Country* (Yale Rep), Film/TV includes *Relay* (Blackbear Films), "Crutch" (Paramount+), "Law and Order: SVU" (NBC), and "The Other Two" (HBO Max). Love to CLA, BWA, Hubs, 妈妈, Tatay. For Dreamers. MFA: UNC Chapel Hill/Playmakers Rep. BFA: Brooklyn College. LaGuardia Arts High School. sergiomauritzang.com.

ANDRÉS NICOLÁS CHAVES (*Ensemble*) is an artist born in the mountains of Colombia, driven by a deep belief in the dignity and boundless value of those often forgotten. His work seeks to hold space for beauty and contradiction, all the while reckoning with the fractured realities of this time. New York theater includes NYTW, Primary Stages, INTAR, and LatinX Playwrights Circle. Regional credits include The Guthrie, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and The Globe. Film includes *La Piel de Ayer* (HBO) and *Tumba del Mar* (NYLFF). Education: NYU Graduate Acting.

RACHEL CROWL she/her (*Apothecary*). Public Theater debut. Off-Broadway credits include *Prince F****t* (Obie) and *Between Two Knees* (Obie). Regional credits include *Between Two Knees*, *Henry V*, and *As You Like It*, *The Swindlers*. Film/TV includes *And Then There Was Eve* and "The Lowdown." Videogames include *Life Is Strange: Double Exposure*. She lives in Wisconsin mostly with her wife and cats.

CALEB JOSHUA EBERHARDT he/him (*Mercutio*). Public Theater debut. Broadway credits include *An Enemy of the People* (Drama League nomination) and *Choir Boy*. Off-Broadway includes *You Got Older*, *Galas*, *Eurydice*, *The Comeuppance* (Obie Special Citation, Drama League nomination), *On Sugarland*, and *Is God Is*. Select TV/Film work includes "Demascus" (Tubi), "Betty" (HBO), and *A House of Dynamite* (Netflix). Training: SUNY Purchase, B.F.A. @rosehardt

DANIEL BRAVO HERNÁNDEZ he/him (*Romeo*) is grateful to be back with The Public! Hernández was previously in The Public's *Much Ado About Nothing* (Mobile Unit). Hernández appeared on Broadway in *Romeo + Juliet* (2024) and Off-Broadway in the world premiere of *Spread* (INTAR). He'd like to thank The

Stars of Tomorrow Project, Brian D. Hills, Clara Bello, Lucia Rogerson, Kate Murray, HCKR, and his family. Sobre todo gracias a Dios.

FRANCIS JUE (*Friar Laurence*) received Tony, Outer Critics Circle, Lucille Lortel, and Obie Awards for *Yellow Face*. Other recent theatre: *Tartuffe*, *Cambodian Rock Band* (Lucille Lortel Award), *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992*, *Good Enemy*, *Soft Power* (Outer Critics Circle Award), *Wild Goose Dreams* (Obie Award). Film/TV: *Good Sex*, *Our Son*, *White Noise*, *Joyful Noise*, “Madam Secretary,” “New Amsterdam,” “Law & Order: SVU.”

ARIYAN KASSAM (*Tybalt/Understudy Mercutio*) is a British-born South Asian Muslim actor with roots in East Africa, raised in South Africa, and a graduate of the Yale School of Drama. His rich cultural background informs a global and deeply human storytelling perspective. He is thrilled to be returning to Shakespeare in the Park for a second consecutive year and to continue developing his theatrical relationship with the incredible Saheem Ali. Previous credits include Luca Guadagnino’s *After the Hunt*. Kassam is deeply grateful for every opportunity he receives to bring his own authenticity to each role.

LACHANZE (*Lady Capulet*) is a Tony-winning actor, four-time Tony-winning producer, and advocate with nearly 40 years of experience on Broadway. LaChanze has served as producer on the lauded *The Outsiders* (Tony Award), the Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Topdog/Underdog* (Tony Award), *Kimberly Akimbo* (Tony Award), *Here Lies Love*, *Jaja’s African Hair Braiding* (Tony Award nomination), *Buena Vista Social Club* (Tony Award nomination), the Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Purpose* (Tony Award), and the upcoming *CATS: The Jellicle Ball*. She also made her directorial debut with *Wine in the Wilderness* at Classic Stage Company, winning the AUDELCO Award for Best Director of a Play. In 2024, LaChanze launched her own production company, [LaChanze Productions](#), where she discovers, develops, and delivers groundbreaking Broadway and commercial entertainment projects. As an actor, LaChanze has starred in *The Color Purple* (Tony Award), *Once on This Island* (Tony Award nomination), *Trouble in Mind* (Tony Award nomination), *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical* (Tony Award nomination), *If/Then*, *A Christmas Carol*, and many others. On screen, she has delivered memorable roles in both TV and film including “Handel’s Messiah Rocks: A Joyful Noise” (Emmy Award), “Melinda,” *The Help*, HBO’s “The Night Of,” “Law & Order: SVU,” Disney animated feature film *Hercules*, Spike Lee’s *Highest 2 Lowest*, and *By Any Means* directed by Elegance Bratton. She was also honored as a [2025 TIME’s Closer](#). LaChanze is committed to producing theatre that transforms, transcends, and inspires. She is the proud president of Black Theatre United, an advocacy organization dedicated to protecting Black bodies, Black talent, and Black lives on and off our stages.

DEIRDRE O’CONNELL (*Nurse*) has worked at The Public Theater, Lincoln Center, Manhattan Theatre Club, Page 73, Playwrights Horizons, Labyrinth, New York Theatre Workshop, Rattlestick, Soho Rep, and the Vineyard. TV includes “The Penguin” (Emmy nomination). Film includes *Eddington*. She has received two Obies, an Outer Critics Circle Award, New York Drama Critics Circle Citation, Lilly Award, Lucille Lortel Award, and Tony Award.

JASON MANUEL OLAZÁBAL he/him (*Lord Montague*). Olazábal has previously performed at The Public in *Guinea Pig Solo* and *Massacre: Sing to Your Children*. Broadway credits include *Julius Caesar* and *Anna in the Tropics*. Select Film/TV credits includes *Skincare*, *I Don’t Feel at Home in This World Anymore* (Sundance Grand Jury Award winner), *Inside Man*, *Bad Boys II*, “Dexter” (SAG Award nomination), and “Fear the Walking Dead” (AMC). MFA: UMKC. LAByrnth Theater Company member.

OKIERIETE ONAODOWAN (*Benvolio*) is known for his acclaimed performances on Broadway, including originating the roles of Hercules Mulligan and James Madison in Lin-Manuel Miranda’s Tony Award-winning production *Hamilton*. Additional Broadway credits include *A Doll’s House*; *Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812*; *Cyrano de Bergerac*; *Rocky*. Off-Broadway credits include *Monsters*, *Hamilton* at The Public, *Luce*, *Neighbors*, *The Shipment*. Onadowan’s film and TV credits include *American Fiction*, *Molli and Max in the Future*, *Generation Wrecks*, *Hamilton*, *A Quiet Place 2*, *The Super*, *Person to Person*, *Thanks for Sharing*, AMC’s “Demascus,” Dean Miller in “Station19,” “Jack Ryan,” “Billions,” “Grey’s

Anatomy,” “Robot Chicken,” “Tuca & Bertie,” “Bojack Horseman,” “She’s Gotta Have It,” “The Get Down,” “Girls,” “Ballers,” and “Blue Bloods.”

JESSICA PIMENTEL (*Escalus*). Brooklyn-born actor/musician and three-time Screen Actors Guild Award winner, featured in numerous film and television productions, is best known for playing Maria Ruiz on “Orange Is The New Black” (Netflix). Notable theater credits include *Don’t Eat the Mangos*, *Jasper*, *Surfer Girl*, *The Clean House*, and *Anna in the Tropics*. Graduate of The American Academy of Dramatic Arts.

MARIAND TORRES (*Lady Montague*). *The Public: Hell’s Kitchen*. Broadway credits include *Wicked*, *Hell’s Kitchen*, *Lempicka*, *Hadestown*, and *In Transit*. National Tour of *Wicked* (Elphaba). Off-Broadway includes *The Great Comet*. Film/TV includes *Holiday Touchdown*, “Law & Order: SVU,” and “Madam Secretary.” Torres starred in the Japan world premiere of *Prince of Broadway*, directed by Hal Prince & Susan Stroman. Love to Nick. Favorite role: Maia’s mama.

MARLON XAVIER (*Pedro*) is of Ecuadorian descent. Thrilled to make his Public Theater debut. Theater: *Extraordinary Aliens*, and many more, Film: *A Stage of Twilight*, *Magic Hour*. TV: “Law & Order,” “Blue Bloods,” “The Savant.” MFA: Actors Studio Drama School. LAByrnth Theater Company member and Actors Studio finalist. Grateful to his wife and his family for their unwavering support.

ABOUT CITIZENS FINANCIAL GROUP, INC.

Citizens Financial Group, Inc. is one of the nation’s oldest and largest financial institutions, with \$226.4 billion in assets as of December 31, 2025. Headquartered in Providence, Rhode Island, Citizens offers a broad range of retail, private banking, wealth management and commercial banking products and services to individuals, small businesses, middle-market companies, large corporations and institutions. Citizens helps its customers reach their potential by listening to them and by understanding their needs in order to offer tailored advice, ideas and solutions. In Consumer Banking, Citizens provides an integrated experience that includes mobile and online banking, a full-service customer contact center and the convenience of approximately 3,100 ATMs and approximately 1,000 branches in 14 states and the District of Columbia. Consumer Banking products and services include a full range of banking, lending, savings, wealth management and small business offerings. Consumer Banking includes Citizens Private Bank and Private Wealth, which integrate banking services and wealth management solutions to serve high- and ultra-high-net-worth individuals and families, as well as investors, entrepreneurs and businesses. In Commercial Banking, Citizens offers a broad complement of financial products and solutions, including lending and leasing, deposit and treasury management services, foreign exchange, interest rate and commodity risk management solutions, as well as loan syndication, corporate finance, merger and acquisition, and debt and equity capital markets capabilities. More information is available at www.citizensbank.com or visit us on [X](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Facebook](#).

ABOUT JEROME L. GREENE FOUNDATION

The Jerome L. Greene Foundation supports select programs that make a significant impact on the lives of all New Yorkers in the areas of the arts, education, medicine, and social justice. Its 40-year history is grounded in the vision of its founder, Jerry Greene, to give back to the city he loved. Today, the Foundation honors this commitment by continuing to fund quality programs and by identifying new ways to increase access to the arts and to education, create opportunities for ground-breaking medical research, and help ensure social justice for all. www.jlgreene.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.

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.

Citizens is the presenting partner of **FREE SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK**.

Jerome L. Greene Foundation is the lead sponsor of **FREE SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK**.

FREE TICKET INFORMATION

ROMEO & JULIET begins performances at The Delacorte Theater in Central Park on Friday, May 22 and will run through Sunday, June 28, with an official press opening on Thursday, June 11.

Tickets to The Public Theater's Free Shakespeare in the Park are distributed in a number of ways. Free tickets may be acquired on the day of the performance in person at The Delacorte Theater, in person at a borough distribution site including 14 dates at Citizens branches (complete schedule can be found at publictheater.org), via an in-person lottery in the lobby of The Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street, or through a digital lottery via the TodayTix mobile app. All tickets are subject to availability.

A limited number of tickets are also available via advance reservation by making a contribution in support of Free Shakespeare in the Park. To learn more, or to make a contribution, call **212.967.7555**, or visit publictheater.org.

The performance schedule is Tuesday through Sunday at 8:00 p.m. (*There will be no performance on Wednesday, June 10.*)

The **Audio Described** performance will be on Friday, June 12. The **Sensory Adapted** performance will be on Sunday, June 14. The **English Open Captioned** performance will be on Thursday, June 18. The **Spanish Open Captioned** performance will be on Friday, June 19. The **American Sign Language Interpreted** performances will be on Saturday, June 20 and Tuesday, June 23.

The full performance calendar and complete distribution details can be found at publictheater.org.

The Delacorte Theater in Central Park is accessible by entering at 81st Street and Central Park West or at 79th Street and Fifth Avenue.

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