



THE PUBLIC THEATER ANNOUNCES ANNUAL JUDITH CHAMPION NEW WORK SERIES LINEUP

Free Readings of Full-Length New Plays Penned by Playwrights Karina Billini, Sanjit De Silva, Jasmine Sharma, and Seayoung Yim

April 7, 2026 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced the second **Judith Champion New Work Series**, a collection of readings in which select playwrights present full-length new plays currently in development at The Public. The readings will take place in June in LuEsther Hall.

Judith Champion, an architect, violinist, and dedicated supporter of the theater, made major gifts to six New York nonprofit theater companies in the final year of her life to help foster the production of original plays. As Champion made these gifts, she said: "Support what is most important to you. One thing that is important to me is to nurture playwrighting so that theater flourishes for future generations."

Director of New Work Development Amrita Ramanan shares: "The series is a way in which we champion writers in the early stages of development of their new work. I am absolutely thrilled that Jasmine Sharma, Seayoung Yim, Sanjit De Silva, and Karina Billini agreed to join us. Their plays speak to what I love best about the theater, encompassing rich and expansive stories, unforgettable characters, vibrant humor, and imaginative explorations of the deep truths that sit at the intersection of humanity, memory, and possibility. I am forever grateful to Mel Litoff and his and Judith's family for their generous support of the Judith Champion New Work Series and so many new work development programs across New York City. In these times of financial scarcity in the performing arts, they keep new work development not only alive, but abundant."

2026 JUDITH CHAMPION NEW WORK SERIES:

PEACHY: a sorta chekhovian traumedy

Written by **Jasmine Sharma**

Directed by **Adrian Alea**

Monday, June 1, 3:30pm & 7:30pm

In 2022, the owner of a Los Angeles-based, family-run Indi-Mex restaurant has the opportunity to franchise. In 1962, a Mexican woman and Punjabi peach farmer enter a "Mexidu" marriage in order to circumvent California's stringent miscegenation laws. *Peachy* is a sorta chekhovian traumedy about cooking with love...and, family.

FOODS OF THE FORGOTTEN WAR

Written by **Seayoung Yim**

Directed by **Chris Yejin**

Dramaturgy by **Amrita Ramanan**

Tuesday, June 9, 3:30pm & 7:30pm

Plagued by a diasporic desire to taste her ancestral doenjang, Wensu travels through a hermit kingdom's history and gastronomy in the hopes of recovering an authentic, pungent flavor that's been sealed and encrypted by modernity. Seen through the eyes of Korean women over time, *Foods of the Forgotten War* is an incomplete survey of how war and colonialism change how we flavor, preserve, and package food and cultural memory.

FOODS OF THE FORGOTTEN WAR is commissioned with Center Theater Group through generous support from the Toulmin Foundation.

THE DAY THE RIOTS BEGAN

Written by **Sanjit De Silva**

Directed by **Mei Ann Teo**

Dramaturgy by **Amrita Ramanan**

Monday, June 15, 3:30pm & 7:30pm

Black July, 1983. It was the day Sanjit's life changed forever. But for the life of him, he can't remember why. In a Zoom call with his parents, memories are rehashed, renewed, and rediscovered, leading to a startling revelation. Told through a captivating solo performance, *The Day the Riots Began* is a story about memory, migration, and the trauma we carry with us.

BROOKLYN BOYS CAN'T FLOAT

Written by **Karina Billini**

Directed by **Nicky Maggio**

Monday, June 22, 3:30pm & 7:30pm

It's Charlie's 35th birthday and nothing seems to be going right in his life: the pandemic, his messed-up back, and his deferred dreams of joining the I.T. team with his childhood buddies, Donnie and Solomon. As he and his boys embark on a revelrous birthday trip to Punta Cana, things start to go awry when 'strapped-for-cash' Solomon secretly invites the work pariah, 'soon-to-be Head of I.T.' Gavin, to join the fun. *Brooklyn Boys Can't Float* is a riotous interrogation of male fragility, friendship, and the mental cost men pay when they don't allow each other to feel.

BIOS:

ADRIAN ALEA (*Director – PEACHY: a sorta chekhovian traumedy*) is a Latiné director and producer creating stories across theater, film, and live events. He is a Helen Hayes–nominated director for *Las Hermanas Palacios*, his adaptation of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, set during the 1980s Miami drug (GALA Hispanic Theatre). He serves as Producing Director of the Off-Broadway company The New Group and is a Guild Hall Artist-in-Residence, plus Drama League Directors Project recipient. Theater Collaborations: Disney Theatricals, Lincoln Center, The Public Theater, New York City Center's Encores!, Gala Hispanic Theater, Williamstown Theater Festival, INTAR, and more. Film/TV: *A West Side Story Story* (2025 Tribeca & New York Latino Film Festivals), *You Go Girl!* (2022 Sundance, sold to Condé Nast), and "O-Dogg" featuring Tariq "Black Thought" Trotter. He served as Associate Director for NBC's *Annie Live!* and previously worked with Jennifer Lopez on her Las Vegas residency "All I Have" and the "Ain't Your Mama" video. BA from Columbia University. MS from Northwestern. He is represented by Lizzy Weingold & Jack Pallone at WME. Instagram: @oye_adriann Website: adrianalea.com

KARINA BILLINI she/her (*Playwright – BROOKLYN BOYS CAN'T FLOAT*) is a Dominican-American playwright and educator from Brooklyn. She is a recent graduate of Juilliard's Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program. She is a proud alum of the Public Theater's 2023–25 Emerging Writers Group, New Harmony Project Conference, Ensemble Studio Theatre's Youngblood, Pipeline PlayLab, among others. Her plays have been workshopped at La Jolla Playhouse, Alliance Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, among others. Billini holds an MFA in Playwriting from the New School and a BA from Marymount Manhattan College.

SANJIT DE SILVA (*Playwright – THE DAY THE RIOTS BEGAN*) is an Actor/Writer/Director/Teacher/Father. He received his M.F.A. from New York University's prestigious Graduate Acting Program. He wrote, starred and co-directed the short film *Time After*. He's written four plays with Deepa Purohit, the latest, *Crushed Earth*, was commissioned by People's Light Theatre and his TV pilot, "Lankan," was developed at the Orchard Project Episodic Lab. De Silva's various stage credits include: Broadway: *War Horse* (Tony-Award Best Play, Lincoln Center Theater). Off-Broadway: *Corruption* (J.T. Rogers World Premiere, Lincoln Center Theater, Dir. Bart Sher), *Elyria* (World Premiere, Atlantic Theater, Dir. Awoye Timpo), *Richard III* (NYSF/Public Theater, Dir. Robert O'Hara, starring Danai Gurira), *The Merchant of Venice* (TFANA, Dir. Arin Arbus), *An Ordinary Muslim* (NYTW, Dir. Jo Bonney), *Dry Powder* (World Premiere, Public Theater, Dir. Thomas Kail, starring John Krasinski and Claire Danes, Lucille Lortel and Outer Critic's Circle Award Nominations for Best Featured Actor). De Silva has been in several films such as *ReEntry*, *Afterparty*, *The Girl is in Trouble* (produced by Spike Lee), *The Company Men* (with Ben Affleck and Tommy Lee Jones), and the critically acclaimed *Arranged*. His television credits include shows such as "Inventing Anna," "New Amsterdam," "Evil," "Tell Me A Story," "Blindspot," "Time After Time," "Madam Secretary," "Blacklist," "Elementary," "High Maintenance," "Homeland," "Blue Bloods," "The Good Wife." He is an Adjunct Professor at the College of Drama at The New School. www.silvadollarfilms.com

NICKY MAGGIO they/them (*Director – BROOKLYN BOYS CAN'T FLOAT*) is a new works director and theatrical curator for the disquiet. Experimenting with form, composition, and space, Maggio manifests theatrical worlds with an eye towards transition, discovery, and a gemini-like quality of intensity. They are a current artist with Mercury Store after serving as a director for Mercury Store's inaugural Director's Intensive and Director's Lab. Maggio was a member of Cultivate Theatre Lab's inaugural cohort and Roundabout Directors Group (Cohort 6). They have directed and workshopped productions at Juilliard School, Breaking the Binary Theatre, Clubbed Thumb, Hi-ARTS, Atlantic Acting School, University of New Mexico, The Brick, The Tank, IRT Theatre, National Queer Theatre, Cherry Lane, and many others. BFA Emerson College, MFA The New School. www.nmaggio.com Instagram: @nickymaggio

JASMINE SHARMA she/her (*Playwright – PEACHY: a sorta chekhovian traumedy*) is a South Asian-American performer/writer/activist. She aims to focus her work at the intersection of race/femininity/Americanness. Sharma is currently a Core Member of The Kilroys, a Playwrights' Center Core Writer, and resident with Colt Coeur. She is a 2026 Finalist for the 48th Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and included on "Women to Watch on Broadway: 2026" by Broadway Women's Fund. Previous acting credits include *Twelfth Night* (The Public Theater), *Love You More* (Tank Core Production), *you don't have to do anything* (HERE Arts, u/s perf.), *Wives* (Aurora Theatre), *CALVIN BERGER: A Musical* (Colony Theatre), *The Wolves* (McCarter Theater), and a lot of new work development. As a writer, full lengths include *Pigeonhole* (2026 SSBP Finalist, developed with NYTW, Center Theatre Group commission), *PEACHY: a sorta chekhovian traumedy* (developed with PWC, IAMA Theatre Company, taught/produced at Yale University, NPC Finalist), *THE JAZMINES: a rage play - and for legal reasons, a parody* (developed with PWC, NPC Finalist), *Radial Gradient* (World Premiere at Shattered Globe Theatre, Kilroys Web 2023), among others. Northwestern University. jasminesharma.org | @jasminesharmaa

MEI ANN TEO (*Director – THE DAY THE RIOTS BEGAN*) makes theater at the intersection of artistic/civic/contemplative practice, across genres, including music theatre, intermedial participatory work, classics, and documentary theatre. Teo's work has been in international festivals in Europe and Asia, and has directed/developed new work across the US, including Madeline Sayet's *Where We Belong* national tour produced by Woolly Mammoth Theatre and the Folger Shakespeare Library. Teo has served as the Artistic Director of Musical Theatre Factory and the Assoc. Artistic Director/Director of New Work at OSF. Teo is the Artistic Director, New Work at Pink Fang (formerly Ping Chong and Company).

CHRIS YEJIN she/her (*Director – FOODS OF THE FORGOTTEN WAR*) is a first-generation Korean American director and writer working across theater and film. Deeply shaped by both Korean and American

cultures, she channels her lived experience into storytelling that bridges identities and perspectives. She is passionate about elevating underrepresented voices and creating space for stories often left unheard. Calling herself a storyteller above all, she chooses the medium that best serves each narrative, whether on stage or screen. She believes storytelling is not just entertainment but a vital form of connection, healing, and preservation of history. Her directing credits include *Did You Eat? (밥 먹었니?)*; *The King's Language*; *I Do for You* (musical); *Your Final Moment*; *Three Girls, Their Dreams, The War*; *Medea: the Woman*; and *Ahn's Three Daughters*. Yejin works between Los Angeles, New York City, and Korea. www.chrisyejin.com

SEAYOUNG (SHEE-young) YIM (*Playwright – FOODS OF THE FORGOTTEN WAR*) is an NYC-based writer, originally from Seattle. She's the winner of the Dramatist Guild's Lanford Wilson Award, the Yale Drama Series Prize, and a recipient of The Venturous Playwright Fellowship from the Playwrights' Center. Yim is a resident playwright with New Dramatists and has taught at Brown University and RISD. Her play, *Jar of Fat*, has a forthcoming world premiere with Theatre Battery in 2026. Other honors: Kilroys Web selection, The Bruntwood Prize (shortlist), L. Arnold Weissberger New Play Award (finalist), Paul Stephen Lim Playwriting Award (2nd place), and The Relentless Award (semi-finalist). Residencies and Fellowships: Clubbed Thumb's Early Career Writers Group, Colt Coeur's residency, Seoulful Productions' Korean Writers Lab, Ma-Yi Writers Lab, Sewanee Writers' Conference Playwriting Fellowship, Hedgebrook's Residency, and the Stephen Sondheim Graduate Fellowship in Theater Arts. Commissions: The Powers Playwriting Fellowship (Old Globe), the Woolly Mammoth x Black List, and The Public Theater + CTG commission.

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, 70 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 Judith Champion New Work Series is made possible through generous support from the **Judith Champion New Work Development Fund** and **Mel Litoff**.

TICKET INFORMATION

All are welcome. Tickets are free and reservations are encouraged. Tickets are available now and can be accessed by visiting publictheater.org, calling **212.967.7555**, 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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