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OSKAR EUSTIS TO STEP DOWN AS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE PUBLIC THEATER

After Serving as Artistic Director Since 2005,
Eustis Will Conclude Tenure in August 2028

July 22, 2026 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director **Oskar Eustis**, Executive Director **Patrick Willingham**, and the **Board of Trustees**) announced today that, after serving as Artistic Director since 2005, Eustis plans to step down as Artistic Director when his current contract expires on July 31, 2028. His departure in August 2028 will conclude The Public's 60th anniversary season at Astor Place.

Eustis said, "I have long hoped that my 70th birthday would be the right moment for me to pass this magnificent theater on to the next generation, and I believe that indeed, the perfect time has arrived. The theater has come through the storm of the last six years with its mission intact, robust and thriving, having weathered Covid, societal upheaval, and the worst crisis the American non-profit theater has ever faced. Our Board, staff, and artists are strong and united around our mission; our audience is robust and hungry for our work; The Public is ready to tackle new challenges with all the integrity and creativity it has shown for the last 70-plus years."

He continued, "This theater, devoted as it has always been to the idea that the culture belongs to everyone, is indispensable. It has been the greatest honor of my artistic life to lead it for 23 years, following in the footsteps of **Joe Papp**, **JoAnne Akalaitis**, and **George C. Wolfe**. I know its future will be even brighter; more than ever, theater has something irreplaceable to offer America's grappling with the great issues of our time. The Public will be at the table to contribute to that conversation."

Public Theater Board Chair **Luis A. Miranda, Jr.** and Co-Chair **Pat Fili-Krushel** shared, "Oskar's service to this organization, and the field at large, continues to be nothing short of extraordinary. The Public's strength and ambition today stand as direct testaments to his leadership and vision through storms and blue skies alike. It will be our honor to celebrate his work over the next 24 months and lead the institutional search committee this fall; the goal is to name a successor next year."

Throughout his career, Eustis has been dedicated to the development of new work that speaks to the great issues of our time and has worked with countless writers in pursuit of that aim, including Tony Kushner, Suzan-Lori Parks, David Henry Hwang, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Richard Nelson, Rinne Groff, Tarell Alvin McCraney, Lisa Kron, Quiara Alegria Hudes, Jeanine Tesori, Philip Kan Gotanda, Ellen McLaughlin, Emily Mann, John Leguizamo, Shaina Taub, James Ijames, Else Went, Michael Friedman, Alex Timbers, Erik Jensen, Jessica Blank, Ryan J. Haddad, Caryl Churchill, S. Shakhidharan, Itamar Moses, Martyna Majok, Lynn Nottage, Danaï Gurira, Sarah Burgess, Stew, Wallace Shawn, Lawrence Wright, Sam Shepard, Mona Mansour, Adrienne Kennedy, John Belluso, Craig Lucas, Christopher Durang, and Richard Foreman.

Eustis' tenure at The Public includes three Tony Award-winning Best Musicals (the 2009 revival of *Hair*, *Fun Home* in 2013, and *Hamilton* in 2015) as well as two winners of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama (*Hamilton* in 2016 and *Sweat* in 2017). He also developed many other groundbreaking plays and musicals, including *Passing Strange*, *Here Lies Love*, *Suffs*, *The Brother/Sister Plays*, *The Vagrant Trilogy*, *Eclipsed*, *Manahatta*, *The Fortress of Solitude*, *Soft Power*, *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures*, *Ain't No Mo'*, *Miss You Like Hell*, *Tiny Beautiful Things*, and many, many more.

His committed leadership through changing economic tides, a global pandemic and generation-defining cultural upheaval, alongside his clear-eyed dedication to bolstering The Public's foundational mission, found expression in the groundbreaking programs he developed. Those include: the Emerging Writers Group, which over the past 18 years boasts alumni such as Dominique Morisseau, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Ryan J. Haddad, Ethan Lipton, and Else Went; the revived Mobile Unit, which has reached audiences in every corner of the city, from parks to correctional facilities; Public Works, which has been adopted across the world as it mixes community members and professional artists in creating profound works of art; and Public Forum bringing world class thinkers, from Michael Sandel to Samantha Power to Reverend Samuel Barber, into dialogue with the theater.

Highlights of Eustis' directorial work with The Public include the New York premieres of Rinne Groff's *The Ruby Sunrise* and *Compulsion*; Larry Wright's *The Human Scale*, which also toured to Tel Aviv; *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, and Public Works' *Twelfth Night* at The Delacorte; the world premiere of Suzan-Lori Parks' *White Noise*; and the revival of Tony Kushner's *A Bright Room Called Day*.

Eustis first walked into the Public Theater as a 16-year-old in 1975. He then spent 30 years, inspired by The Public, leading five theaters, from Switzerland to San Francisco to Rhode Island, until he had a chance to return to the theater that first taught him what a theater could be in 2005.

He commissioned Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* when he ran the Eureka Theater in San Francisco (1980-1989) and directed its world premiere while at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles (1989-1994).

In 1995, he became Artistic Director of Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, Rhode Island, where during a 10-year tenure he revitalized the theater, twice winning the Eliot Norton Award for Outstanding Production in New England (for the world premiere of Paula Vogel's *Long Christmas Ride Home* and Tony Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul*). While there, he founded and chaired the Trinity Rep/Brown University Consortium for Professional Theater Training.

"Oskar Eustis, like Joe Papp before him, is a pioneer of the American theater. For Oskar, the work is paramount, but making and keeping that work accessible for all has always been the goal. He's taken lesser-known and well-known creators alike and nurtured their shows to bring out the best in both in an often-inaccessible business. Oskar's artistic selections over his tenure have brought undeniable delight to audiences of all ages. I will never be able to say thank you enough to Oskar for taking a chance on Hamilton, over a decade ago."

- **Lin-Manuel Miranda**

"Oskar is a force of nature! What a blessing his stewardship has been to so many writers and to everybody at The Public Theater!"

- **Suzan-Lori Parks**

"The Public has been my artistic home since I was 22 and Joe Papp produced my first play. With his protean intelligence, energy, and passion, Oskar built on Joe's vision, continually proving that the most innovative, inclusive, and politically engaged art can also be the most critically and commercially successful. As the finest dramaturg of his generation, he made The Public into America's best theater for writers, nurturing and supporting our works to become the best versions of themselves. Oskar showed that theater still has the power to make better our communities, our world, and ourselves."

- **David Henry Hwang**

"There isn't enough room in this release to share the outsized impact that Oskar Eustis has had on the American Theater and on my life. I have been learning from him since his dramaturgy course at Brown University, where I first encountered our world's greatest contemporary playwrights. Then through working with him, I got to work directly with so many of those brilliant theater artists—first, as an intern at Trinity Rep to 15 years producing at The Public to collaborating on co-productions and tours with Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company. His own theatrical legacy may be large, but larger still is his love and deep dedication to all the non-profit American Theater can stand for, not only in this country as a whole but for each and every one of us."

- **Maria Manuela Goyanes**

Eustis serves as Professor of Dramatic Writing and Art and Public Policy at NYU. Previously, he held professorships at Brown, Middlebury College, and UCLA, and currently holds the A.D. White Professorship at Large from Cornell University. He has Honorary Doctorates from Brown, Middlebury, and Rhode Island College. He was elected to the Theater Hall of Fame in 2017 and to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2022.

Following the step-down, Eustis shared, "I am looking forward to spending many more evenings with my beloved wife, Laurie, and I will continue to teach, to write, and to serve the field in any way I can. I Chair the Board of **New York Focus**, a brilliant investigative news organization devoted to revealing how power works in Albany; Richard Nelson has pulled me deep into relationship with Kyiv's **Theater on Podil**, and I suspect that relationship will only deepen as well; I am newly devoted to **Almasi Collaborative Arts**, a theater in Zimbabwe founded by Danai Gurira; my participation with **The Professional Non-Profit Theater Coalition**, a country-wide advocacy group that I founded in 2020 with Nataki Garrett and Maria Goyanes has brought me great satisfaction; and I am also co-chairing a long-term study on the role of cultural spaces in communities for the **American Academy of Arts and Sciences**. Mostly, I plan to cheer on my successor at The Public and support my beloved theater any way I can—including by staying out of the way."

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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 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.

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