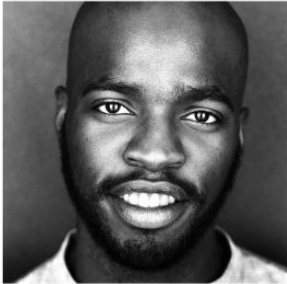


THE **PUBLIC.**

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

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Leland Fowler



Greg Keller



Orville Mendoza



Kenita Miller



Lauren Molina



Suzan-Lori Parks



Martín Solá



Pearl Sun

CAST & CREATIVE HEADSHOTS

**THE PUBLIC THEATER
ANNOUNCES COMPLETE CASTING FOR
WORLD PREMIERE OF
*PLAYS FOR THE PLAGUE YEAR***

**By Suzan-Lori Parks
Directed by Niegel Smith**

**Suzan-Lori Parks to Make Stage Debut as “The Writer”
Complete Cast Includes Leland Fowler, Greg Keller, Orville Mendoza,
Kenita Miller, Lauren Molina, Martín Solá, and Pearl Sun**

**Limited Three-Week Engagement to Begin with Joseph Papp Free Performance
On Friday, November 4 and Run Through Sunday, November 27;
Official Press Opening on Wednesday, November 16 in Joe’s Pub**

September 14, 2022 – The Public Theater (Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director and Patrick Willingham, Executive Director) announced complete casting today for the world premiere of **PLAYS FOR THE PLAGUE YEAR**, written by and featuring Pulitzer Prize winner and Public Theater Writer-in-Residence **Suzan-Lori Parks** and directed by Bessie Award winner **Niegel Smith**. The strictly limited engagement will begin performances in Joe’s Pub with a Joseph Papp Free Performance on Friday, November 4 and

run through Sunday, November 27. **PLAYS FOR THE PLAGUE YEAR** will officially open on Wednesday, November 16.

On March 13, 2020, as theaters shut their doors and so many of us went into lockdown, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and The Public's Writer-in-Residence Suzan-Lori Parks picked up her pen and her guitar and set out to write a play every day. What emerged is a breathtaking anthology of plays and songs that chronicle our collective experience and the hope and perseverance that occurred throughout that troubling year. Performed in the intimate music venue, Joe's Pub, **PLAYS FOR THE PLAGUE YEAR** is a theatrical concert featuring the music and plays of Suzan-Lori Parks. At once, both a personal story of one family's daily lives, as well as a sweeping account of all we faced as a city, a nation, and a global community. Niegel Smith directs this life-affirming new work that beams with humor and humanity, bears witness to what we've experienced, and offers inspiration as we shape our future.

"When I started writing the project, on Day One, I wanted to create something that we could experience together, whenever it was safe for us to be physically together again," said playwright, performer, and Public Theater Writer-in-Residence **Suzan-Lori Parks**. "While I could have just written down my thoughts in a journal, I decided to write plays instead, because plays are meant to be done with others, in the company of friends and strangers—and, for me, plays, and the resulting act of theatre-making, celebrate our humanity and demonstrate the process of community. During lockdown I feel like we all longed for that. And I also wrote songs, to accompany the plays, because singing with others creates magic. These plays and songs are meant to give us all the tools we need to process both what we've been through and what we're still going through now."

"As we were emerging from lockdown, Suzan-Lori approached me to guide the conception and development of this epic project. True-to-form, she had set her pen, typewriter, and computer to task each day to write plays and songs that capture our collective experience in all its complexity and nuance—from the ways we cling to loved ones to moments of communal rage and joy," said **PLAYS FOR THE PLAGUE YEAR** director **Niegel Smith**. "They are as expansive as our society, incorporating a multiethnic, super talented company of actors, singers, and musicians. She has dared to make a work that brings us closer in our humanity by looking deeply at our recent past and offering us visions of hope and resilience."

The production will feature costume design by Montana Levi Blanco, lighting design by Ania Washington, sound design by Dan Moses Schrier, projection design by Peter Nigrini, and prop management by Alexander Wylie. Ric Molina will music direct and will contribute to both vocal and instrumental arrangements for the production. Buzz Cohen will serve as the production stage manager and Janelle Caso will serve as stage manager.

Suzan-Lori Parks is a longtime Public Theater artist, serving as Writer-in-Residence since 2008. Her world premieres at The Public include *White Noise* (2019); *Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)* (2014); *The Book of Grace* (2010); *Fucking A* (2003); the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Topdog/Underdog* (2001); *Venus* (1996); and *The America Play* (1994). Parks' upcoming musical *The Harder They Come* will premiere in spring 2023.

"There is no writer in the world like Suzan-Lori Parks," said Artistic Director **Oskar Eustis**. "Her brilliant and utterly unique voice is one of the mountaintops of the American theater, and The Public is proud to have been her home for over thirty years. When the pandemic hit, Suzan-Lori began a personal practice: writing a play every day, a chronicle of the times we were living through. What emerges is a personal, intimate journal, but also a public window into that first, torturous year of the crisis. *Plays for the Plague Year* is funny, powerful, quirky, emotional, and deeply satisfying."

Over the course of her career, Suzan-Lori Parks has creatively innovated the play-a-day format, writing several collections of plays daily over different time periods. Her anthology *365 Days/365 Plays* premiered at The Public in 2006 and featured a play written every day between November 13, 2002 to November 13,

2003. Suzan-Lori Parks is also the writer of *100 Plays for the First Hundred Days* (2018), which chronicles the first 100 days of Donald Trump's presidency through play diaries.

In addition to **PLAYS FOR THE PLAGUE YEAR**, The Public's 55th anniversary season at Astor Place will include Lorraine Hansberry's **A RAISIN IN THE SUN**, directed by Robert O'Hara, marking the legendary playwright's Public Theater debut and only the second time that this classic has been produced Off-Broadway. September also welcomes Elevator Repair Service's **BALDWIN AND BUCKLEY AT CAMBRIDGE** in the Anspacher Theater. The production is a profoundly relevant presentation of the legendary debate between virtuosic writer James Baldwin and father of American conservatism William F. Buckley, Jr. In October, **WHERE WE BELONG** begins in the LuEsther Hall—an intimate and exhilarating solo piece written and performed by Madeline Sayet and directed by Mei Ann Teo, co-produced with Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company in association with Folger Shakespeare Library. Sayet's story is a celebration of the indigenous community and an in-depth exploration of colonialism that asks us what it means to belong in an increasingly globalized world.

In keeping with guidance from city, state, and federal officials, proof of vaccination against COVID-19 and the use of face masks are no longer required in Joe's Pub, the venue that **PLAYS FOR THE PLAGUE YEAR** will be presented and where food and drink will be available for purchase throughout the performance. Patrons are strongly encouraged to wear a mask when not actively eating or drinking. In all other performance spaces at The Public, masks are strongly encouraged except on all Tuesday evening performances and Saturday and Sunday matinees when a face mask will be required for everyone. These mask required performances are to accommodate those who are immunocompromised, or uncomfortable in an unmasked environment. Learn more at [Safe at The Public](#).

The Library at The Public serves food and drink Tuesday through Sunday, beginning at 5:00 p.m. and closing at midnight. The Library is closed on Mondays. For more information, visit publictheater.org.

SUZAN-LORI PARKS (*The Writer, Playwright*) is the first African-American woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize in Drama for *Topdog/Underdog*. Other awards include the MacArthur Genius Grant and the Gish Prize for Excellence in the Arts. In November 2022, Parks will be inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame. Parks' adaptation of *The Gershwin's Porgy and Bess* won the 2012 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical. Her other works includes *The Book of Grace*, *Unchain My Heart: The Ray Charles Musical*, *In the Blood*, *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*, *The America Play*, *Fucking A*, and *365 Days/365 Plays*. Parks also works extensively in film and television, most recently as the screenwriter for *The United States vs. Billie Holiday* and *Genius: Aretha* as creator, writer, and showrunner. Her novel *Getting Mother's Body* is published by Random House, and in her spare time she writes songs and fronts her band Sula & The Noise. Parks is a former writing student of James Baldwin.

NIEGEL SMITH (*Director*) is a Bessie Award-winning theater director and performance artist. He is the Artistic Director of NYC's Obie Award-winning theater, The Flea; board member of A.R.T./New York; and was a ringleader of Willing Participant. His other current directing project includes *The Ritual of Breath Is the Rite to Resist*. Smith most recently directed the jazz opera *The Hang* (Drama League nomination). His theater work has been produced at The Alley Theater, The Barbican, Classical Theatre of Harlem, The Flea, The Goodman Theatre, HERE Arts Center, Hip Hop Theatre Festival, The Invisible Dog, Luna Stage, The Melbourne Festival, Magic Theatre, Mixed Blood, New York Fringe Festival, New York Live Arts, Phoenix Theatre Ensemble, Playwrights Horizons, Pomegranate Arts, The Public Theater, St. Ann's Warehouse, Summer Play Festival, and Under the Radar, among others. Smith is co-director of *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* (Kennedy Prize in Drama, Bessie Award, Edwin Booth Award, Pulitzer Prize finalist). He associate directed the Tony-winning musical *FELA!* (restaging that production in London, Lagos, and its world tour) and assistant directed the original Broadway and Off-Broadway productions of Tony Kushner's *Caroline, or Change*. www.niegelsmith.com

LELAND FOWLER (*Actor*) previously performed at The Public in Mobile Unit's *Henry V* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Additional Off-Broadway credits include *one in two* (The New Group), *Novenas for a Lost*

Hospital (Rattlestick), *If Pretty Hurts Ugly Must Be a Muhfucka* (Playwrights Horizons), and *Measure for Measure* (TFANA). Regional credits include *we are continuous* (Williamstown Theatre Festival); *Queen of the Night* (Dorset Theatre Festival); *King Lear* (St. Louis Shakespeare Festival); *Skeleton Crew* (Westport Country Playhouse, Dorset Theatre Festival); *Protect the Beautiful Place* (McCarter Theatre Center); *Seven Guitars* (Yale Rep); *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Tiny Houses* (Chautauqua Theatre Company); *Songs to Grow On* and *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* (Alliance Theatre). Fowler has performed on television on "City On A Hill." Fowler holds a BA from Morehouse College and an MFA from Yale School of Drama.

GREG KELLER (*Actor*) has originated roles on and off-Broadway in new plays by Clare Barron, Stephen Adly Guirgis, Ayad Akhtar, Sarah Ruhl, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Amy Herzog, Richard Greenberg, Julia Cho, Moises Kauffman, Theresa Rebeck, Mara Nelson-Greenberg, Jordan Harrison, Jenny Schwartz, Daniel Goldfarb, Sheila Callaghan, Melissa Ross, Zayd Dohrn, David Grimm, and Robert O'Hara, to name a few. Keller has an Acting MFA from NYU and was a Lila Acheson Wallace Playwriting Fellow at the Juilliard School, where he was a two-time recipient of the Lecomte Du Nouy prize.

ORVILLE MENDOZA (*Actor*) has performed at The Public Theater in *Timon of Athens* directed by Barry Edelstein; *Road Show* by Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman, directed by John Doyle; and *Romeo & Juliet* (Delacorte) directed by Michael Greif. Most recently, Mendoza was Grumio in *The Taming of the Shrew* at The Old Globe, directed by Shana Cooper. Broadway credits include *Pacific Overtures* and *Peter and the Starcatcher*. Off-Broadway credits include *Adrift in Macao* (Drama Desk nomination, Barrymore Award winner Best Supporting Actor); *Found* (Atlantic Theater); *Passion* and *Pacific Overtures* 2017 revival (Classic Stage Co.). Mendoza has appeared on "Billions," "Dead Ringers," and "The Blacklist." Mendoza was also a vocalist for "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" and "John Mulaney and the Sack Lunch Bunch."

KENITA MILLER (*Actor*)'s Broadway credits include *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf* (Lady In Red/Tony nomination), *Come From Away* (Hannah), *Once on This Island* (Mama Euralie/Grammy nom.), *The Color Purple* (Celie), and *Xanadu* (Erato/Kira understudy). Miller has performed Off-Broadway in *Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin* (Granny) and *The Wild Party* as a part of New York City Center's Encores!. She has also performed in *Bella: an American Tall Tale* (Miss Cabbagestalk/Mama), *Langston In Harlem* (Zora Neale Hurston/Drama Desk/AUDELCO Award nominations), *Working* (Drama Desk Award), and *Avenue Q*. Miller's Film/TV credits include *tick, tick...BOOM!*; "Sesame Street;" "Bull;" "Hostages;" "The Blacklist;" and *Liberty City Is Like Paris to Me* (Bruce Weber).

LAUREN MOLINA (*Actor*)'s Broadway credits include Johanna in *Sweeney Todd* and Regina in *Rock of Ages*. Molina has performed Off-Broadway as Goldie in *Goldie, Max & Milk*, Bella Rose in *Desperate Measures* (Lucille Lortel, Outer Critics Circle Award nominations), Her in *Marry Me A Little*, and Megan in *Nobody Loves You* (Second Stage). She is the co-creator of the acclaimed comedy-pop band, The Skivvies. Molina's favorite regional credits include the role of co-conceiver and Lucy in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Cincinnati Playhouse), Cunegonde in *Candide* (Helen Hayes Award; Huntington, Goodman, Shakespeare Theatre), Audrey in *Little Shop of Horrors* (Cleveland Playhouse), Squeaky Fromme in *Assassins* (Yale Rep), Countess in *A Little Night Music* (Huntington), and Janet in *The Rocky Horror Show* (Bucks County Playhouse).

MARTÍN SOLÁ (*Actor*) is a New York-based actor, singer, and teacher. He has appeared on Broadway in *On Your Feet*, *The King and I*, *Coram Boy* and Baz Luhrmann's *La Bohème*. He has also been a Featured Artist with the New York Pops at Carnegie Hall and has performed in over a dozen productions with the New York City Opera. Solá has performed with City Center Encores!, The Public Theater, Roundabout Theatre Company, and many other leading theater companies in NYC and throughout the U.S. More recently, he has appeared as Father Russo in the Netflix series "Archive 81," and guest starred on "FBI" (CBS) and "Law and Order: SVU" (NBC). Over the pandemic Solá wrote, directed, and starred in his first short film, *May I Take It Your Plate?* which made its debut at the Latino International Film Expo just outside of Chicago earlier this year. Solá also teaches singing at Yale University in New Haven and has had a private voice and acting studio in NYC for many years. For more info visit www.martinsola.com.

PEARL SUN (Actor)'s Broadway credits include *Come From Away*, *If/Then*, and *Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical*. Off-Broadway credits include *Assassins* and *Merrily We Roll Along* (City Center Encores!); *Happiness* (Lincoln Center Theater); and *The Seven* (New York Theatre Workshop). National tours/regional credits include *Next to Normal* (first National tour), *Into the Woods* (ACT of CT), *The Price* (Arena Stage), Bernstein's *Mass* (Philadelphia Orchestra), and *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots* (La Jolla Playhouse). Sun has performed on television in "Fleishman Is in Trouble" (upcoming; FX on Hulu), "New Amsterdam" (NBC), "The Blacklist" (NBC), "Orange Is the New Black" (Netflix), "Gotham" (FOX), and "The Good Wife" (CBS).

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 Forum, Under the Radar, Public Lab, Public Works, Public Shakespeare Initiative, 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 and the upcoming Broadway production of *Ain't No Mo'* by Jordan E. Cooper. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 60 Tony Awards, 184 Obie Awards, 56 Drama Desk Awards, 59 Lortel Awards, 34 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, 58 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 LuEsther T. Mertz Legacy Trust provides leadership support for The Public Theater's year-round activities.

TICKET INFORMATION

PLAYS FOR THE PLAGUE YEAR begins performances in Joe's Pub on Friday, November 4 and will run through Sunday, November 27, with an official press opening on Wednesday, November 16.

Public Theater Partner, Supporter, and full-price single tickets 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 Public's Joseph Papp Free Performance initiative will offer free tickets to the performance on Friday, November 4 through TodayTix. The lottery will open for entries on Friday, October 28 and will close at 12:00 p.m. Noon on the day of the performance. Winners will be notified by email and push notification anytime from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and if selected, winners will have one hour to claim their tickets.

The performance schedule is Tuesday through Sunday at 7:00 p.m., and Saturday at 1:00 p.m. (*There will be no 1:00 p.m. performance on Saturday, November 5 and Saturday, November 26. There will be no 7:00 p.m. performance on Wednesday, November 23 and Thursday, November 24*). The full performance calendar can be found at publictheater.org.

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