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**WNYC IN COLLABORATION WITH THE PUBLIC THEATER  
ANNOUNCES  
FREE SHAKESPEARE ON THE RADIO:  
*RICHARD II*  
A FOUR-PART SERIAL RADIO BROADCAST AIRING ON WNYC  
JULY 13-16**

**By William Shakespeare  
Conceived for the Radio and Directed by Saheem Ali  
Featuring André Holland in the Title Role**

**WNYC to Make *RICHARD II* Available as a Podcast  
for On-Demand Listening**

**Free Shakespeare in the Park Continues this Summer with  
Encore Broadcast of THIRTEEN's *Great Performances*:  
*Much Ado About Nothing* on August 14**

June 18, 2020 – WNYC in collaboration with The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced today a four-part radio play of Free Shakespeare on the Radio: ***RICHARD II***. Conceived for the radio and directed by **Saheem Ali**, ***RICHARD II*** was originally scheduled to begin the 2020 Free Shakespeare in the Park season at The Delacorte Theater. WNYC and The Public Theater have joined forces to reimagine this beloved summer tradition as a radio play that speaks to this current moment in our nation's history.

***RICHARD II*** will be broadcast over four nights from **Monday, July 13 through Thursday, July 16 at 8:00 p.m. EST** on WNYC 93.9 FM and AM 820 for listeners in the New York Tri-State Area and will stream at WNYC.org. WNYC will also make the series available as a podcast for on-demand listening.

In support of the fight against racism and inequality and in recognition of the unspeakable violence against Black communities, The Public Theater and company dedicate this production to the Black Lives Matter movement.

"A fractured society. A man wrongfully murdered. The palpable threat of violence and revenge against a broken system. Revolution and regime change. This was Shakespeare's backdrop for *Richard II*. I'm exceptionally proud of this production, recorded for public radio with a predominantly BIPOC ensemble, led by the extraordinary André Holland," said director **Saheem Ali**. "It's my hope that listening to Shakespeare's words, broadcast in the midst of a pandemic and an uprising, will have powerful resonance in our world."

The complete cast of **RICHARD II** features **Barzin Akhavan** (*Salisbury/Marshall*), **Sean Carvajal** (*Gardener's Man/Surrey*), **Michael Bradley Cohen** (*Bushy*), **Sanjit De Silva** (*Mowbray/Exton*), **Biko Eisen-Martin** (*Fitzwater*), **Michael Gaston** (*Northumberland*), **Stephen McKinley Henderson** (*Gardener*), **André Holland** (*King Richard II*), **Miriam A. Hyman** (*Bolingbroke*), **Merritt Janson** (*Scroop*), **Elijah Jones** (*Hotspur*), **Dakin Matthews** (*Gaunt*), **Jacob Ming-Trent** (*Carlisle*), **Maria Mukuka** (*Queen's Lady/Servant*), **Okwui Okpokwasili** (*Willoughby/Abbot*), **Estelle Parsons** (*Duchess of York*), **Tom Pecinka** (*Aumerle*), **Phylicia Rashad** (*Duchess of Gloucester*), **Reza Salazar** (*Welsh Captain*), **Thom Sesma** (*Ross/Keeper*), **Sathya Sridharan** (*Bagot*), **John Douglas Thompson** (*York*), **Claire van der Boom** (*Queen*), **Natalie Woolams-Torres** (*Green*), and **Ja'Siah Young** (*Groom*). **RICHARD II** features original music composition by **Michael Thurber** and **Arabella Powell** will serve as production stage manager.

For the first time in its almost 60-year history, Free Shakespeare in the Park will not take place, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through The Public's partnership with WNYC—whose longstanding history of championing the stories and spirit of New York City and the surrounding region aligns closely with The Public's mission—the beloved summer tradition of free Shakespeare will continue on, in a new way, and reach an even wider audience than ever before.

Join WNYC and The Public Theater as they bring Free Shakespeare on the Radio to the airwaves with William Shakespeare's **RICHARD II**. Brought to you in a serialized radio broadcast over four nights, listen as the last of the divinely anointed monarchs descends and loses it all. When King Richard banishes his cousin Henry Bolingbroke and deprives him of his inheritance, he unwittingly creates an enemy who will ultimately force him from the throne. One of the Bard's only dramas entirely in verse, this epic and intimate play presents the rise of the house of Lancaster through a riveting tale of lost sovereignty, political intrigue, and psychological complexity. Conceived for the radio and directed by **Saheem Ali**, experience this beautiful and cutting play in an exciting serialized radio format from wherever you are!

"A ruler, legitimate by the law of the land, begins to not only break the law, but violate the norms and traditions that make a nation function. What is to be done? A country is torn by the upheavals that follow injustice. What could this possibly have to do with America in 2020? Shakespeare's masterpiece is both a political and a psychological exploration. Filled with some of his most beautiful and profound poetry, spoken by a superb cast of New York actors under the inspired direction of Saheem Ali, this gorgeous radio version will entertain, excite, move, and educate," said Public Theater Artistic Director **Oskar Eustis**. "We are proud to be partnering with WNYC, our sister organization that shares so many of our values, to bring this play to life. We may not have Free Shakespeare in the Park this summer, but we will not let Shakespeare vanish from New York at this crucial time."

"WNYC is thrilled to partner with The Public Theater, Saheem Ali, and the entire cast to reimagine a hallmark event of New York City summers and present a work of such timeliness and relevance," said **Goli Sheikholeslami**, President and CEO, New York Public Radio, which includes WNYC. "While the pandemic requires us to remain apart, radio drama offers listeners the intimacy of audio and a way to come together through shared experience. The audio producers and actors worked together to overcome the challenges inherent in socially distanced rehearsals and recording, and the final result is a riveting opportunity to deeply listen and truly contemplate the words of this rarely-produced work."

Continuing the Free Shakespeare in the Park offerings this summer, THIRTEEN's *Great Performances* will present an encore national broadcast of the 2019 summer production of *Much Ado About Nothing* on **Friday, August 14 at 9:00 p.m.** on PBS (check local listings), [pbs.org/gperf](https://pbs.org/gperf), and the PBS Video app. This bold interpretation of Shakespeare's comedic masterpiece features Danielle Brooks and Grantham Coleman as the sparring lovers Beatrice and Benedick. Tony Award winner Kenny Leon directs with choreography by Tony Award nominee Camille A. Brown. Set in contemporary Georgia with an election race underway, *Great Performances: Much Ado About Nothing* finds the community of Messina celebrating a break from an ongoing war, but not all is peaceful amid the merriment. Former rivals battle it out, revenge is sought, and trickery runs amok in this timeless comedy of romantic retribution and miscommunication.

*Much Ado About Nothing* was the first Free Shakespeare in the Park production to appear on *Great Performances* in over 40 years.

## **BIOS:**

**SAHEEM ALI** (Richard II *Director*) is a proud immigrant from Kenya. His recent productions include *Fires in the Mirror* (Signature Theatre), *The Rolling Stone* (Lincoln Center Theater), *The New Englanders* (MTC), *Passage* (Soho Rep), *Fireflies* (Atlantic Theater Company), *Dangerous House* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *Sugar in Our Wounds* (MTC), *Tartuffe* (Playmakers Rep), *Where Storms Are Born* (WTF), *Twelfth Night* (The Public Theater's Mobile Unit), *Kill Move Paradise* (National Black Theater), *Nollywood Dreams* (Cherry Lane), and *Dot* (Detroit Public Theater). He has workshopped new plays at Playwrights Horizons, Playwrights Realm, MCC, New York Stage & Film, Page 73, and The Lark. He is a Usual Suspect at New York Theatre Workshop, Sir John Gielgud SDCF Fellow, and Shubert Fellow.

## **ABOUT WNYC:**

With an urban vibrancy and a global perspective, WNYC is New York's public radio station, broadcasting and streaming award-winning journalism, groundbreaking audio programming, and essential talk radio to the city and beyond. WNYC is a leading member station of NPR and also broadcasts programs from the BBC World Service, along with a roster of WNYC-produced local programs that champion the stories and spirit of New York City and the surrounding region. From its state-of-the-art studios, WNYC is reshaping audio for a new generation of listeners, producing some of the most-loved nationally-syndicated public radio programs including *Radiolab*, *On the Media*, *The Takeaway*, and *Snap Judgment*. WNYC broadcasts on 93.9 FM and AM 820 to listeners in New York and the tri-state area, and is available to audiences everywhere at WNYC.org, the WNYC app, and through major digital radio services, all made possible through the generous support of our members, donors and sponsors.

## **ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER:**

**THE PUBLIC** is theater of, by, and for all people. Artist-driven, radically inclusive, and fundamentally democratic, 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 Studio, 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 *Girl From the North Country*. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 59 Tony Awards, 178 Obie Awards, 55 Drama Desk Awards, 58 Lortel Awards, 34 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. [publictheater.org](http://publictheater.org)

**The LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust** provides leadership support for The Public Theater's year-round activities.

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