

[UPBEAT MUSIC]

MAN: The Public Theater is--

WOMAN: The Public Theater is--

MAN: To me, the Public Theater is--

WOMAN: The space that can be filled by real people.

WOMAN: Where I can see bold and experimental theater.

MAN: Revolutionary.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** We all know how hard the past two years have been. But here we are in 2023 with an industry that looks, well, somewhat similar to the one we had before. And while some people have fought for a return to normal, the rest of us are left wondering whether or not that "before" was really the best thing for all of us.

So today, we stop and take a moment to think about where we've been, where we are, and where we're going. We think about the future of theater here on the season finale of *Public Square 2.0*.

Hey, everybody. It's Garlia here at The Public. The Public Theater is--

WOMAN: Your work.

GARLIA [LAUGHS]

CORNELIA

JONES:

Hello and welcome to the season finale of *Public Square 2.0*. We made it. And I can hardly believe it. I mean, I can, but I can't. [LAUGHS] It's been quite the year. A year ago at this time, I could not have imagined that the relaunch of the podcast would have turned into this, a 17-episode season.

My name is Garlia Cornelia Jones, the Director of Innovation and New Media here at The Public. This season, we have interviewed some incredible artists, all of whom have called The Public Theater home.

From our first guest, the Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award, and MacArthur Award-winning Suzan-Lori Parks, or SLP as she is often called, to Tony Award Nominee Robert O'Hara. And the other fantastic individuals we've had on the program. Artists like Marcel Spears, Saheem Ali, Ruth Sternberg, [? Amica ?] [? Ramadan, ?] and Emilio Sosa.

It has always been important for us to highlight these artists and staff. Why? Because our work together, the effort we put in every day is only made complete when you, our audiences, walk through our doors, sit in our seats, and give us the honor of your attention.

And regardless of how you visit, whether downtown at 425 Lafayette where we make our home inside one of the former New York Public Library branches, or uptown at the Delacorte in New York City's Central Park at the site of what was once a nexus of burgeoning culture in the African-American neighborhood known as Seneca Village, we are grateful for the chance to steward these spaces as we share them with you.

And I am grateful for the opportunity to continue building out amazing new avenues for engagement, continuing to welcome you into new digital and virtual spaces.

Now The Public Theater is a pretty big place with multiple performance venues, departments, and programs. It takes a massive effort from a dedicated staff to make this happen. And one of the most influential people to this process is our long-time artistic director, Oskar Eustis. So, back in May, we took a moment to chat in studio about his career, how he got here, and what he sees for the future.

OSKAR EUSTIS: I'm Oskar Eustace, he/him/his, and I am the Artistic Director of The Public Theater.

GARLIA Great--

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: Proudly.

GARLIA Yeah. It's very clear that we do this a lot, so you exactly knew what to say. We don't even have to say things. So

CORNELIA I'd love to start at the beginning. And I'm sure a lot of people are wondering how one becomes an artistic director

JONES: at an institution like the Public. So I'm curious, before we start talking about your role and how did you even get here-- and I don't mean at The Public in specific, but what drew you into this industry in the first place.

OSKAR EUSTIS: When I was about 13 years old, I got a job based on a federal grant in something called the CETA Program, the Comprehensive Education and Training Act. And it was one of the last residues of the Great Society-- this was in 1972. 1971. And I was a high school kid. And I was being paid \$100 a week to appear in *The Ugly Duckling* and perform it for elementary schools throughout the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

And the point of the grant was to try and get nonprofits to train young people to work in their field. So in that way, this grant was strikingly successful because it trained me to work in the nonprofit theater and I've never left it.

I fell in love with theater during those years, and when I was 16, I ran away from home and came to New York, which is where you have to come. And I was-- by that point, I was an experimental theater groupie and in front of all of these experimental theaters. Robert Wilson and the Performance Group, and Charlie Ludlam and Richard Forman.

And one group in particular, Mob of Minds, who I'd gotten to know on the road and gone to festivals with, were in residence at this place called The Public Theater. So I walked into The Public Theater in the spring of 1975 as a experimental theater groupie, and looked around me and went, what is this place?

Spring of '75, *A Chorus Line* had just opened. So I was walking in at the propitious moment, and literally, I was like one of those little ducklings who walked into The Public Theater and it got imprinted on me. This is what a theater should be. And essentially, the story of my life then was 30 years of trying to recreate The Public Theater in various cities around the world until I got to come back and run the thing itself.

GARLIA Mmm. I love that.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: It's fun.

GARLIA And so *The Ugly Duckling*, the Hans Christian Andersen, right, right, right.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: You bet.

GARLIA So you went from that into *A Chorus Line*?

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: Well, well--

GARLIA --a little bit.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: A little bit in between. But I was also a member of a company that was famous and then infamous for a while, the Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis. I started acting there. And then I started falling in with these experimental companies that were touring through mostly the Walker Art Center in the early '70s, and I just got goggle-eyed at this experimental work and I just completely converted to avant garde. And it was in that guise that I first walked into The Public.

GARLIA Yeah. I love that. So I know your father was involved in politics, right? He was a district attorney, and then

CORNELIA involved in the Democratic Party in Minnesota.

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: Correct.

GARLIA How do you think that political involvement affected or maybe continues to affect you as an artist? And I know

CORNELIA that your mother was also a woman studies professor. Do you think that their social awareness had an influence

JONES: on you or has any bearing on the shows or projects that you gravitate?

OSKAR EUSTIS: I think my family remains enormously influential for me. My father and my mother were sort of classic liberal Democrats in the 1960s until the tensions of the '60s tore them apart and my mother ended up joining the Communist Party and marrying a third-generation Communist Party member, who was my stepfather and remained my stepfather until he died in 2014.

And so my mother and stepfather were the communist side of my family. My father remained a liberal Democrat. He was actually Chair of the State Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, but he had to give up politics as part of his sobriety because it was-- he went-- as he was getting sober, he realized that politics and alcohol were just totally connected for him, so he had to give it up to stay dry.

But all four-- and he remarried, too. And all four of those parents, who lived a couple of miles away from each other, where professors at the University of Minnesota. So law, public policy, women's studies, and physics.

GARLIA OK.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: So what I think everything about what I am now can be explained by me rebelling against them, but not completely. So I never went to college, although I've been teaching in colleges for 40 years. But it's like, I didn't do the academic route.

GARLIA Yeah.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: And I have created and worked in one of these deeply political theater, but not according to any of the strictures or ideologies that my parents have. So I was deeply impacted by their values, but I also went into the arts and did something very different.

GARLIA Yeah, yeah, yeah. And what were those tensions like for you? The trends-- the positions and the political

CORNELIA upheaval of the '60s and sub '70s? You mentioned the rebellion and you also talked about experimental theater.

JONES: How did these affect you as a person and it's come through your art?

OSKAR EUSTIS: Well, both of my sets of parents were very ideological. My mother and stepfather, very strict down the line dialectical materialists. Marxist-Leninists. And my father, much more a John Kenneth Galbraith kind of liberal, New Deal Democrat.

And again, I shared a lot of the values that underlie those things. There's a fundamental idea of equality in both of those. There's an idea of the value of every individual person and that no person is expendable. There's also a sense that we only find who we are in community, and it's only by being together.

So all of those things I didn't rebel against. I rebelled against the rules and strictures and ideologies, and the experimental theater looked like a wonderful pool to dive into. But I-- most of our listeners won't remember, but the '60s and early '70s is a very messy time, and the counterculture contained everything from hard left radical politics to the drug culture to Guru Maharaj. Just this stew of political, cultural, internationalist dissent in which we didn't distinguish between all those things.

GARLIA Yeah.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: And it all was part of the counterculture.

GARLIA Right.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: And I found a home in the aestheticized counterculture, maybe the rebellious experimental theater that didn't believe in story, that attacked the proscenium arch. All things--

GARLIA Yeah, yeah, yeah.

CORNELIA

JONES:

--feel silly, but were very important at the time.

GARLIA Yeah, yeah. One of the questions that we out that we just asked a few of our guests for the upcoming

CORNELIA [INAUDIBLE] episode is about the support that they did or didn't have in their youth.

JONES:

So I'm wondering-- and then we can pivot away from your youth, but I'm wondering what type of support you did have as a young artist, and was it an intentional mentorship artists you looked up to? And for that matter, what support do you now wish that you had looking back?

OSKAR EUSTIS: I honestly think I was incredibly lucky. And one of the ways that I used to tell the story of running away from home and joining the circus, joining-- living at the Performing Garage just was as this swashbuckling piratical story of me avoiding all institutions and all establishment ways and look at what I made for myself, and all of that is true.

But in recent years, I've also realized there's another way of telling that story, which is, despite my lack of a college degree, I'm a highly literate, highly verbal, tall, straight white man from Minnesota. And another way to tell the story is I floated on such a sea of privilege that I could get away with doing all the things. I didn't have to get a college degree to success. I didn't have to do--

And now looking back and recognizing that, it really alters my sense of how much I was given, which was an enormous amount.

GARLIA Yeah.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: And my parents disapproved of what I was doing with great vehemence, but they never tried to stop me. They never threw real obstacles in my way. They let me leave home, and yet-- when I say run away from home, they weren't looking for me. They knew I was gone. And they let me do it. And you know they talked to me on the phone. And they-- it's hard to explain that I was rebelling, but I was rebelling within an extremely supportive environment.

GARLIA Yeah.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: And they were hardwired to love me and support me. And that made a huge, huge difference in the risks I was able to take as a young man.

GARLIA Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Yeah, there's definitely something about-- I think that rebellion with some support, which I

CORNELIA feel helps you-- it feels like I can a risk, but it's also safe because I have all these people here to say, well, if you

JONES: fail, we'll be here, we won't tell you. But then we will.

OSKAR EUSTIS: And I have to say, in the most primitive possible way, my mom just loved the hell out of me. She thought I was so-- she was my biggest fan til my day she died. It used to irritate my wife to no end, that my mother would come visit and just think I could do no wrong. Nobody was happy to tell her what I did wrong. But that unconditional love, it just has a huge impact. I don't think I could have done half of the things I'd done without that.

GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES: Yeah. That's really-- I think about that in terms of my own children and just people in my whole life and how that love and care is like a buttress right of support, and you're like, all right, but you-- I believe in you, so just keep doing it.

OSKAR EUSTIS: I just-- one last thing about my childhood because I can't resist. I spent much of my middle age trying to understand why I was this incredible contradiction that, on the one hand, I was incredibly self-confident and I could walk into a room full of Nobel Prize winners and then still think, I'm as smart as any of these guys. I wasn't, but I would think that.

But then in the end, there are other areas in which I was so insecure that I would break out in flap sweat. And I was thinking, what-- and one day, it suddenly struck me and I laughed because it was so stupid. I'm incredibly self-confident about all the parts of me that my mother embraced, and all the parts of me she didn't embrace, I'm still a nervous wreck. And it's that simple. It's not that complicated.

GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES: --wow, wow, wow, wow. Yeah. No, but that's-- I mean, that's true. So now I'm going to think, what should I embrace about my kids? And then to help them, right? That feels, though, like a classic conundrum there. It's also-- so many artists I know that have a similar way of being-- that this industry asks so much of us and also asks us to process emotions for consumption a whole lot of the time.

OSKAR EUSTIS: It sure does.

GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES: Do you still find yourself processing that contradiction? And how do you guide others through that as well?

OSKAR EUSTIS: Yeah, no, the good news about my insecurity is I feel like I can harness it to make me vulnerable and make me listen and to make me humble in a way that if I just paid attention to the other parts of me, I would be completely insufferable. So that's great. It's often painful, but it's great.

And honestly, there's a whole lot of my dramaturge, which is the thing that sort of got me where I am, is working with writers, is really just a question of trying to love them as best I can, which means I have to understand them, I have to know them if I'm going to love them.

And then I have to help them realize the best version of themselves. The best version of this idea they have. And really, of course I have technical tips and structural ideas and notes and that kind of stuff, but what I'm really trying to do is just listen really hard and reflect back to them the perfect image of what they're imagining, and hopefully they can see themselves or see their play in that mirror and it starts getting better and better.

GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES: And you do. You've given notes to me. [LAUGHS]

OSKAR EUSTIS: I try.

GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES: Still remember them. Trying to change the number. OK, so we have a lot of feedback from listeners on the show that are not in the industry, but I also think that there are just as many people out there who don't know all the ins and outs, but just love theater.

So for those people, someone who's in the car or at home, I'd love for you to answer what might seem like a very basic question, but what exactly does an artistic director do? And I don't mean in a general sense. I think we get that, but what does a typical day look like and how do you balance all the needs of an institution this large and established?

OSKAR EUSTIS: What an artistic director does is a problem I've been working on for 47 years now. I've been an artistic director for 47 years now. Six different theater companies, none of them anywhere near as important as The Public Theater. So this is the last 20 years of The Public has been the climax of my career.

And here's the things I would say. The core part of my job is I am responsible for fulfilling the mission of the theater. And among other things, that means I'm responsible for the artistic quality of everything we do of every choice we make. It doesn't mean I make all those choices, but it means I have to stand behind them, I'm responsible for them.

So often what that means, in the case of the woman sitting across the table from me, is I'm responsible for hiring the people who make the choices. So I've got to hire the right people. I've got to pick the plays that fulfill the mission and that are excellent. I have to pick the directors, I have to prove the casting. Projects in development, I have to work on for years, pick what we develop and work on for years.

All of those things I do with the aid of a lot of other people, but ultimately I'm responsible for it. So in a way, any artistic director is saying is judge me by the results. It's like-- a very nasty football coach, but a very smart one, Bill Parcells, used to say, "You want to know how good we are? Look at the score." And it was that simple. He said, "If you're good, you win. If you're not good, you don't win."

And it's the same with theater. If we're good, we make work that people care about and want to see. And sometimes that means they support it by buying tickets, sometimes it means that they support it by giving money, sometimes-- who knows? But people have to want to see what we do. They have to care and think what we do is important.

And it's my job to, A, oversee all the art and make those choices, but then B, particularly The Public, it's my job to tell the story of The Public over and over and over. Not just the history, but what we stand for now. And try to, by talking, by persuading, by painting the picture, help people understand how all of this different activity makes sense. How it's one theater but seven different programs.

GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES: Yeah, yeah. Oof! Yes.

OSKAR EUSTIS: And then I have to make the budget balance, too. I have a partner with that, Patrick Willingham, Executive Director, is a co-CEO with me, but we have to work together to make the budgets work, and that's sometimes the least fun part of the job.

GARLIA The least fun, yes. Oof, that is a lot. Yes. So-- OK. So leadership in six different institutions, has your leadership style changed over the years? And how does the context around the institution the size, the location, and things like that affect how you manage and ultimately lead?

OSKAR EUSTIS: Those are two beautiful interrelated questions. Every theater that I've run has been in a different community and has a different role in that community. And I feel like the core-- the first entry-level question you have to answer when you take over one of these places is, what role is it serving? What additional role could it serve, and how are we going to do it in an excellent manner? How are we going to fulfill that role well?

And this is very different from, say, when I ran Trinity Rep and Rhode Island, which is the State Theater of Rhode Island, the largest cultural institution of the state, and we, in a way, had stewardship over the cultural lives of all of the million people who live in Rhode Island.

So I had to make theater for all of them. I had to go out to them, I had to bring them in. It was a civic institution as much as a theater.

At The Public, we have a really important role in New York. We're really important around the communities of New York. But we also have a really important role in the American theater as a whole. And the way our community here is the community of all of the American theater, and it's our job to set examples, to create work that other people can do, to pioneer programs who, when they're successful, other theaters can look at them.

So in a way we're at the leadership of the American theater community as much as we're in New York. Those things are different with every-- has my style changed? Oh boy, I hope so. And at least from my limited point of view, the beautiful thing about this is as I've gone back to letting many more people into the dialogue about what we do, The Public's decisions have gotten better. It's actually improved the theater. It's not just nicer, it's actually better theater.

GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: Yeah and that's a relatively recent change that I still can't say I've mastered, but I'm trying-- I'm trying.

GARLIA OK. For those of you that follow The Public Theater, pay attention to the New York arts and culture scene, or just
CORNELIA follow the news, then you might have heard a bit about some recent shifts here at The Public. As I mentioned
JONES: before, we all know the past few years have been hard. And leading an institution like this means making some difficult decisions, ones that people don't always understand or agree with.

This interview happened earlier in the year before some of these decisions had been finalized and announced, so we don't get to talk about them specifically. But we did have a chance to talk with Oskar about what he believes is important to theater, how he makes decisions, and what he sees as the future for this industry.

I'm glad you said the word access, and you just talked about it in a broad sense in terms of how we as an institution impact artists and as they come into The Public. Back in 2016, you did an interview for *Vogue* where you've said-- where you said, "I've always loved teaching. It forces you to distill what you care about most."

So I'm wondering if we can talk a bit about that, but in the context of career development and cultivation. How do you go about ensuring that institution like The Public creates a pathways for growth, access, and development amongst the staff? And is that distillation still an active part of your day to-- is that distillation still an active part of your day today even when you're not in a literal classroom, yeah?

OSKAR EUSTIS: Yeah. I would say that the mentoring and support of younger artists and leaders and just staff members is the most important thing I do. And I do it probably about half the time, and the other half the time, I raise money. And then I try to pick a few plays.

But it-- really, it matters enormously to me. And one of the changes, as part of our cultural transformation that I'm so happy about, is we just explicitly said that teaching and career development is now one of our prime goals. That every manager in every department is responsible for the career development of the people that report to them. And I always sort of did that informally, but it's wonderful to say, oh no, this is actually my job.

GARLIA Right, yeah.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: And it was a very bittersweet victory. In the first year of the pandemic, our artistic staff got decimated because we had six people hired off our artistic staff to be artistic directors at other theaters. And, of course, that was hard for us, it was a big loss. But what it meant was, it was working.

GARLIA

CORNELIA

JONES:

So I'm glad I glad you brought up the pandemic. You joined The Public in 2005 and you have shepherded us through some fantastic growth. And then in 2020, you were also at the helm as we have to deal with, as the entire world is dealing with COVID. So can you talk for a minute about that experience? What it was like to have to lead such an established institution when the entire world felt like it was upside-down?

OSKAR EUSTIS: After March 12, 2020, when the theaters closed in New York, I was actually in the hospital with COVID when the theaters closed. So I went into the hospital with the theaters all running, and by the time I came out, it was a ghost town.

And the next two years were the hardest and worst years of my professional life without exception. And it was because the size of the crisis was absolutely unprecedented. The American theater has never had a crisis this large, this nationwide.

And because the combination of the cries for racial justice as well-- and inequity in the broadest sense, as well as the strictures of not being able to perform with COVID were a ferocious combination, but actually a fundamentally a good one.

Because what actually happened is that George Floyd was murdered, and a whole bunch of people said they're not going to take it anymore at exactly the moment when the theater had ground to a halt anyway. So we had an opportunity to remake it. And that's pretty exciting.

And so now, the big thing I found my job is, is I have got to lead this theater back to economic health, which it is not [INAUDIBLE], yeah, but we will. We'll get there. I need to resist the counter-revolution. I need to resist the blowback that has already started against some of the gains we made in the last three years. And I have to make sure that the changes that we made are deep enough into the structure of the theater that we will withstand the thermidor, as scholars of the French Revolution call it, the counter-revolution.

But then I also did one final task, which is-- I think my job is to stabilize this theater economically, culturally, artistically so that I can hand it off to the next people in fantastic shape with the best possible chance they have of succeeding, because one of the terrible things I'm seeing-- we're seeing all around the country right now is that a lot of young artistic directors of color got handed broken, poisonous theaters that were never going to make it, and said, here, fix this.

GARLIA Right.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: And it's a terrible thing to do to young artistic directors. And I am very worried about the backlash that's going to come when theaters fall and artistic directors get blamed and-- so I need to not be part of that trend. I need to hand off a really solid institution. If I can.

GARLIA Yeah, absolutely. So you mentioned George Floyd and the contradiction that was 2020 while we were both in the middle of a pandemic and uprising. And as we've mentioned a few times, we've been involved in this cultural transformation process for a couple of years to get together.

And honestly, I've really appreciated the shifts I've seen internally over those years. I feel like I can always pinpoint a moment because I've been in those meetings and I've been seeing things on a very micro level. But it's not been easy, and personally, I feel like we still have a long way to go. How did the shutdown affect your view of leadership at The Public and within the industry?

OSKAR EUSTIS: Well, in so many ways. I can't name them all, but one is one of the first and simplest was that there was permission in the summer of '20 for a whole lot of people to express a whole lot of anger and criticism of me. And it was everything together that made that possible.

And although it was painful, I like to think it was also-- because fundamentally, a lot of people knew that I could hear it and I would hear it.

GARLIA Mm-hmm. Yeah. It was-- so, I mean, you mentioned it a little bit just now, but was that criticism hard to take?

CORNELIA And I think earlier you said something that stuck with me, and maybe I'm paraphrasing what you wrote, on a sea of privilege, and you just said something similar in terms of not depending on flattery, which is an interesting way to think of it.

So what is it that makes you frame your past that way? And does your awareness of that privilege now affect you as an artistic leader?

OSKAR EUSTIS: Yeah, well, it certainly has changed my view, and one of the things that I think it's done in a salutary way is made me a lot more humble and a lot less cocky about how right I am. And to just acknowledge how many other voices are necessary to make The Public a great theater.

I try very, very hard now. I had to face-- because I got told a lot that people felt bullied, perhaps it's just-- they certainly felt intimidated by me, that I would get irritated and they'd feel completely shut down like they couldn't say anything.

And I just had to say, oh, I gotta take responsibility for this because, of course, in many ways, I'm now one of the very oldest people on staff, too. So I'm a really old, successful leader, and I better watch my behavior a lot more if I want the people around me to give me their best.

GARLIA Right, right.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: And I'm really trying hard to do that. I made a commitment that all of the important artistic decisions of the theater would be made at a table with five other people around them, half-white, half-not, people of color, half-man, half-women, my associate artistic directors and managing director and director of producing.

And that commitment, it doesn't mean that-- I'm still responsible, but there's been like three times in the last three years that I've had to go, yeah, I disagree with you as we going to do this. Most of the time, we come to a consensus together. And the decisions are better because of that.

GARLIA Yeah.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: Absolutely see it every day. And so that is exciting to me to also say, if we can solidify this kind of leadership so this form of collective thinking becomes a hallmark of The Public as well, that would be pretty great.

GARLIA Yeah. To that end, thinking about leadership, you mentioned earlier how you feel a lot of young ladies of color
CORNELIA have been put in a difficult position, and you've joked about money and spending half your time fund-raising, and
JONES: then sometimes picking plays. Can we talk for a minute about just the basic economics of our industry?

There's an obvious view of the difference between theater and film, and the way that theater, both nonprofit and commercial, produces a revenue. What do you think is the economic future of theater? We know that audiences aren't coming back like they used to. So I'm wondering what you see as the path forward. Is that streaming new media and how does that affect programming strategy?

OSKAR EUSTIS: You accused me of joking when I said I spent half my time fundraising. I realize you're right, it's more like 70%. And-- I'm serious. I can't speak for the industry as a whole, but I for The Public that we have always depended primarily on contributed revenue and we need to keep that up.

And partly it's because we give away all those seats in Central Park for free, partly because we're committed to keeping our prices low, but really, more fundamentally, it's because we're trying to change people's idea of what the theater is. It's not something you buy special access to for the special privilege and you got a seat and-- it's there for everybody.

GARLIA Right.

CORNELIA

JONES:

OSKAR EUSTIS: And that means we have to think of it like we think of the public library. The public library doesn't sell books. It doesn't sell memberships. They're there to let you take those books home for free. Success, for me, would be making that a permanent part of The Public's profile where it's understood that everything is free.

GARLIA The last several years have seen an explosion of art in new ways, from Zoom theater to audio plays, augmented reality, and immersive experiences. Innovation in the digital and virtual spaces has become an unavoidable and exciting part of our theatrical landscape.

CORNELIA

JONES:

For this episode, I also sat down with Sarah Ellis of the Royal Shakespeare Company and Scarlett Kim from the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Now we're all friends, so this is not the entire interview, but I feel so fortunate to be in the company of innovation and digital leaders at legacy organizations. We could have continued the conversation for hours, and maybe we will, but that'll have to wait for next season.

This is really exciting. I feel like-- I'm like fangirling a little bit because I'm on this podcast with both of you. I know, Scarlett, we'd been texting about what the three of us could do together for quite some time and just thinking about-- and then I think-- I thought, wait, let's just have them both on at the same time. That feels like a great start to whatever we could do, and we'll figure everything else out after that.

So I just want to-- I just wanted to get started by having you both introduce yourselves. If you could tell us your name, pronouns if you'd like to share, and how you identify within this industry.

SARAH ELLIS: I'm Sarah Ellis. I'm Director of Digital Development at the Royal Shakespeare Company, and I am fangirling back at you both. It's surreal, really wonderful thing to be part of this podcast and together with you.

My role at the RSC, I've been doing it for-- I think just over 10 years, and it really is about how we're welcoming new parts of our world into theater-making, effectively, and has been extending the theater-making toolkit.

But it's also about where generations meet and where people meet, and that is what theater has done wonderfully over hundreds of years. So we're just in a moment if you know what I mean. And so my job is more about people than technology at the moment, and it's great to be here, and with you and Scarlett.

GARLIA Scarlett?

CORNELIA

JONES:

SCARLETT KIM: Hello. I'm Scarlett. I use she/her pronouns. I am also fangirling, so that's happening in all directions. I am an artist, creative producer, director. Currently, I am Associate Artistic Director And Director of Innovation and Strategy at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival where I see my role as being two-prong.

One is to produce XR, immersive, all kinds of projects and artistic work that expands the definition of theater. And the other prong being thinking about art as a form of entrepreneurship and expanding how we do our business in the performing arts industry.

So I had been at OSF for the past two years and change, invited by Nataki Garrett to come be a part of a collaborative and rising artistic leadership team charged with thinking about the future of theater and theatrical storytelling. It's great to be here.

GARLIA

Great. Thank you. So before we dive in talking about the state of our industry and how we plan to solve all the problems of the world, I would love for each of you to just talk a bit about yourselves if we could back up and start at the very beginning, which I hear is a very good place to start.

CORNELIA

JONES:

Do you remember the first time that you fell in love with the theater? When was it and what was so special about that moment? Anyone who feels like they want to go first.

SCARLETT KIM: Well, I can jump in, and the moment that comes to mind for me, I knew that I wanted to-- I thought I wanted to be a writer, and then I moved here to the States alone to go to boarding school in Boston.

And I was cast as Blanc Du Bois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and that was a transformative experience for me because it really allowed me to see theater as a laboratory where I can perform different versions of myself and rehearse how I want to exist in the world. And to test out what is true for me, what feels true for my body, and test out how I interacted with other people.

And as I was listening to hours and hours of the dialect of that character, it really empowered me to think about theater as a kind of R&D for life, for myself, for society, and performance as a way to think about truth through a very pluralistic lens.

So I think that was my-- a reckoning that comes to mind, but growing up, I was-- Korean shamanism was a really big part of where I grew up in Korea, and that the sacrilegious, profane, community-oriented, abundantly food-driven, utilitarian, healing ritual and ceremonies of Korean shamanism, I think, is the bedrock of how I think about theater as a public agora for exchange and transformation.

SARAH ELLIS:

Wow. That's gorgeous. I came to theater as an art form quite late. I studied music, so I definitely had a connection-- as a child, it was very much that collective experience around music is that really inspired me and got me. And I think theater's not dissimilar with music as well. It's very collaborative. Whatever city you go to, wherever you travel, if you-- you can connect with people, and I think this is very similar.

But I think-- so I was like one of those kids where for the school trip, we would go to the theater and that really moved me, and I think that that's a really important part of education learning and arts learning and things like that, but what really got me was when-- how I got into this space was basically an ex-boss and mentor just took me to see plays. And I remember seeing a play by Debbie Tucker Green and being held on every single sentence that was written in that play.

And what I loved about it was what I thought or the many absolutes I had in my head around opinion were utterly, utterly transformed and I walked away knowing that theater is this a beautiful space to throw so many ideas in a room together and let people imagine and empathize in different characters and different contexts, and I think that was very transformative, and I think I've always held that as a really massive convening power around the potential of theater and what it can do.

I think, for me, theater is one of those art forms which is one of the most-- has the most sort of human connection in it. And looking at character and looking at story and looking at-- I mean, I think the pandemic really highlighted how we crave touch, how we crave connection, and if you don't have those aspects in your life, what that does to you.

And I think we're also seeing in the behaviors that are coming out of the pandemic when we don't have-- we don't look people in the eye and understand the impacts of what you say or how you connect.

And so for me, I think theater as an art form has a huge potential when we're looking at a whole generation of people that connect virtually and in-person, that we can disrupt those virtual spaces and provide greater connection and meaning in ways that are wonderful and wondrous and transformative.

And I think that that's where-- I've always thought about when you have virtual connection in theater, it's not making them feel furthest away, that you're experiencing something that other people are having a live experience and you're getting the broadcast version, I really want to think about how we get really close to you in your home or really close to you wherever you are and however you're experiencing that theater and how we can grow the connection together.

And I think that that is one of the really profound things about theater, is, it doesn't-- how can I put it a director will light a scene and get you to look at certain aspects on stage. A performer will read a line in a particular way to get you to see or hear them in a particular way. It's hard as an audience member to turn away from that when you're in that and present in that and with having that co-presence together. And I love that. I love that real-timeness of it.

And I love the ephemerality of theater. I love the fact that those who were there at that moment, where the people who were there and you experienced that, and that in some ways, it isn't replicable in such a data-driven way. And I think me and Scarlett were having a conversation about this the other day, is that we're in such an absolute world where we're looking at absolute-- technology being quite absolute, and there's something glorious about the stickiness and the lack of quantifiability about the arts and about theater. That's important when we're so unsure as a society right now. It's OK to not know the answer.

GARLIA

Mmm.

CORNELIA

JONES:

SARAH ELLIS: Yeah. I've got-- many a time I've got in trouble by being pathologically optimistic, but now I-- it's weird, isn't it? But sometimes you do need the optimism to-- basically, some of the biggest learnings I've had over the past few years, and particularly, like looking at that, it was actually a really-- it was a date. It was a line in the sand.

It was a date where our theaters shut. It's not even something that gradually evolved, is it? It's like the pandemic happened, but it was a date where our theaters shut. And we never-- we had to grieve, we had to be in the moment, we had to respond, we had to be tactical. A lot of things we weren't in our gift.

And in that moment, everything changed. And so through that, where we were going as an organization was very much on this innovation track, and we had levels of confidence and like optimistic certainty, which never really existed.

It was just-- but it was there. It was like-- we were on a track and we were going to develop work and we had all of those-- yeah, we had a confidence in the distribution of that work, we had to-- I mean, we had much more solidity even though it probably wasn't as solid as we thought it was, but we were working in more solid times.

And then the pandemic hit, and actually, the thing that struck me most and the thing that I can't turn away from, which we hadn't been discussing pre-pandemic enough, a tool through an innovation lens was the huge digital inequity that's out there. And the digital inequity in people's homes, the digital inequity across how we design for a lot of innovative work or perceived digital work.

And how-- that, for me, is the thing that's really stuck with us, is that those inclusive futures must include technology that's in the hands of the people that you want to share that with, and that you can make work that can use new tools, et cetera.

But actually, innovation through practice and performance has become way more on my radar than the actual tools that we're using to do that, and I think that's been quite important in how we look at our practice and how we don't infantilize the tools in which we are given.

And we are a critical friend for that in terms of theater. We are a critical friend because the values of data can then look at a technology such as AI and interrogate it rather than just assume that we'll use those technologies. The data is a really robust muscle of art form there, if you know what I mean, in order to sculpt that.

But those are the profound shifts, really, over the past few years, is how do you-- so a lot of it wasn't about the product anymore, it wasn't about the piece that became significant, it became about the infrastructure and the design systems and how we create those infrastructures more equitably and more usefully for our audiences. Where our audience is at and what they're craving so that we design with them in mind became much more resonant.

And then the other thing is in making that work, pay, freelancers, expertise, and that makes the work slower when you're actually looking at the design systems, you have to look at the power structures within that to ensure that you are making work in an inclusive way as well as thinking about your audiences inclusively.

GARLIA Yes. Yes, exactly. I love-- go ahead.

CORNELIA

JONES:

SCARLETT KIM: Can I respond to that? Because I feel so inspired always by you, too, but Sarah, what you were just saying, you said something to me a few months ago when we were having an amazing stack of pancakes, something about change-makers and decision-makers and going from being a change-maker to a decision-maker, and I've been really meditating on that because in my role-- I mean, innovation is my title.

So sometimes I'm like a symbol of change. So I wrestle with how to-- that's obviously not a monolithic thing, that's all kinds of things, but I'm like, well, how do we think about change as not something that's optional or on the fringes or something that comes after the decision, but something that's built-in and foundational to how we make decisions.

How we create infrastructure from the ground-up with this mind towards change? So I just-- that framework, I'm really grateful for pancakes and change-making frameworks from you.

SARAH ELLIS: Pancakes. Golly, I've never eaten so many pancakes in my life, but it is-- right. I think that the pandemic shifted us from outliers to much more integrated aspects of our organizations and our company, and that we can't-- again, we can't move back from that.

So when we're talking about inclusivity, actually, our roles have been othered and outliered and been seen as change, when actually, our roles are integral to what it is about today, and we want to work with that, and it's not always about changing what's brilliant about theater. It's about the muscle and the tissue and the connectivity and looking at it as much more organic ecosystem of what theater is.

And that actually, in the more traditional aspects of our art form, it is really about how those areas are inclusive, and elitism and exceptionalism are problematic with a generation coming through that have experienced what it is to be cut off.

And so that's-- it is about-- and I think that-- I think that as a decision-maker rather than a change-maker, it does change your approach and your set of responsibilities. And so a lot of the time, it's also reminding yourself that you're not that outlier anymore, and actually, it's hard-- it's actually hard to integrate and be in those decision-making processes because you get different scenarios in that, too.

So it's a very live conversation for all of us, actually. I think we all want to move-- we want to lose the D-word, the digital words, we want to lose that. And I think, like you were saying, Scarlett, to have artistic leadership that celebrates a multiplicity of programming, celebrates our roles in the spaces that we're in and recognizes that one of the biggest risks you can take in the arts around ambition is paralyzing yourself with not taking that risk of a piece of work and how we deal with risk artistically in many angles, and it's a craft, and it's--

It's not maverick. It's actually really considered and really well put together, and that actually a space for listening to that and thinking about our relevance and thinking about our purpose as convening spaces for the general public and where they're at now is-- we're not in competition, if you know what I mean. The infrastructure shouldn't be in competition with each other. We are-- it is the world we're in right now.

SCARLETT KIM: I mean, it's been so important to my soul to be in community with you all and other folks who are inhabiting this innovation role inside of-- especially legacy organizations and institutions that are straddling preservation and innovation.

And how do we-- it's sometimes so eerie to me, the specific resonances between all of our experiences. But that also-- it gives me a lot of-- empowers me to think about, well, if we're able to detect these patterns around how we're navigating legacy into change, that's actually-- I'm so I'm really excited about that field connection and how do we build together, how do we build these resources together.

I mean, Sarah, even just the conversations that we've had around, well, we both now have a virtual OSF and virtual RSC, like some of the challenges around distribution and access, so resonant, and it's-- I was so excited to have that conversation with you on such a specific and deep level in a way that sometimes I feel like I'm a startup inside of this large machine. So that has been the treasures that I carry with me.

And I'm very lucky that I had had Nataki Garrett as my boss who really sought to redefine what is our primary business as a theater-producing organization? How do we think about things that so much assumptions around like season? What is our season? And how do we actually strip away all the assumptions and, I guess, calcified status quo around it and actually have an opportunity to redefine what that is expansively and through the lens of inclusion?

So when I first came into my role, I remember Nataki jokingly saying to me in private like, oh, we're going to-- this job is going to be staging a coup inside of the context of American theater, which can be so much allegiance to how things always were and how things should be.

And there's so much in place that reinforces this is our business, and anything other than that, thinking about things in terms of access and abundance, I have found, really can trigger fear of obsolescence, I think it can trigger and destabilize cultural elitism.

So in that context of the American theater industry, that's how I came into this role of, maybe this is would be staging a coup, and I'm forever grateful for that invitation and framing.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:**

I love this conversation around building infrastructure, especially as it relates to the support that infrastructure can provide for both the audience and the artist and how we push back against that elitism.

But I want to go back for a second because both of you, actually, all three of us have the words innovation or digital or media in our titles. And can you each talk a bit about what that intersection of theater and media means for you? What was it to draw-- what was it that drew you to the idea of utilizing these digital strategies inside of art forms that a lot of people could see as analog? Scarlett.

SCARLETT KIM: Well, I'm a hybrid person. I feel like my life story and how I see myself has always been liminal, hybrid. I'm often occupying multiple identities, I'm often in between spaces.

So to me, digital tools just felt like it's expanding my toolkit of what theater is to me. And I think about-- when we curate art-- I mean, what does that word even mean, curate? I'm actually trying to intentionally not use that word because it has so much gatekeeping associations around it.

But when we engage artists, I'm thinking first and foremost about artists' mobility. How can we support artists' move between disciplines and mediums and industries? How can I be the catalyst of supporting an artist in thinking about their practice expansively and through an entrepreneurial lens?

So it feels like media and digital feels like just more abundance, just more dishes of delicious food on our communal table. Multiple things can be centered at the same time, and I resonate with Sarah's saying. It doesn't-- sometimes I observe that digital is experienced as a kind of betrayal or like a replacement of liveness as we know it, but I'm actually really excited about how digital provides new opportunities for thinking about liveness anew. Yeah.

But digital is not actually in my title. My title is Director of Innovation and Strategy. And honestly, some of the most fulfilling work that I've done here in my role has been the nerdy work of rewriting commissioning contracts so that it thinks about ownership of the IP differently for artists or using technology-empowered tools to revamp our grant tracker to allow more fluid communication between our producers and our development team.

So sometimes, to me, the digital is not necessarily the content of the work, but more like we've been saying, the infrastructure or the foundational technology that can allow us to collaborate more fluidly.

SARAH ELLIS: Yeah. I mean, I've got the D-words in my title, so it's like--

GARLIA Yeah, you do. You--

CORNELIA

JONES:

SARAH ELLIS: D, D, D. And then just becoming more and more, I mean, obsolete, really, which I love, because I talk about obsolescence in the company, and the company like, what? What are you saying? And I'm like, no, no, I'm really comfortable with obsolescence. I mean comfortable like success of my job is. You don't need like a digital-titled human in the role.

But I think the D-word is very misleading, really, because often, you get asked if you do the IT system or the website, and that's like not my job.

SCARLETT KIM: Oh my God, literally like all the time. I mean--

SARAH ELLIS: Also, there is an absolute global conspiracy against me and photocopiers. Like I've never met a photocopier that I've managed to use in any successful way whatsoever. So there are real, real ironies in my job title. And so then it comes back to I profoundly think and I'm curious and I'm interested in alchemy of collaboration between theater practitioners, and maybe an industry or an aspect that hasn't connected before.

And over the past few years, those technology collaborations, if you put artists and engineers together, that alchemy is wonderful and delightful and gorgeous. And what I love about that work is the translation piece. I love when you get that different thinking coming together and seeing what happens to the form and seeing what happens to our work and practice.

So I've never been very good at doing the same thing again. Like I'm not-- I'm like, OK, what's the-- like, I'm not very good at that. Like, that's-- I don't know why, it's just-- it just-- that's a whole different podcast. But what I am curious about is looking at new spaces for theater to be present and working in. And I think it is that-- that's the thing that's exciting and I'm really lucky that we are living in a moment where we can do that and it is exploratory and we are in a perpetual state of discovery.

SCARLETT KIM: I mean, I've been saying like, Shakespeare was a creative technologist. He was. Like he was a collage artist. He was experimenting with the most cutting-edge technology of the time. I actually find that way of thinking of one thing, visual theater makes the original theater obsolete.

I think that's actually a dangerous kind of thought, actually, because it means that there's something that's real and everything that is not, that thing is fake or less than. And I'm so baffled-- well, I don't know if I'm baffled, but I'm disturbed by that-- I think theater is resilient and abundant, so why are we treating it like it's this brittle, fragile thing? Theater can actually morph reinvent itself-- shapeshift constantly.

So I'm-- and that's what-- that excites me about the enduring relevance and the power of theater, is that it is so-- it's like that Pokemon Ditto. Or maybe like-- or it's like something that can infinitely permutate.

So I'm like how can we really think about theater through abundance and through shapeshifting and not this thing that, well, if you create a different part, take a photo of it. If you take a photo of theater, it's going to-- the theater is going to go up in flames like it's a vampire. Like no, I think it's actually much more resilient.

GARLIA Yeah, yeah.

CORNELIA

JONES:

SARAH ELLIS: It's really resilient. It's been around for ages, but also, like-- I mean, we did some work in the pandemic where we use some interactivity. And what was delightful-- what it's the power shift at the moment, it's sort of like a generation coming through using these technologies that they have in their hands and have always grown up with are just finding it really easy to use if you know what I mean. Like a phone and interactivity and all of that is just not something you even have to give instructions for to a younger generation.

And then what it's highlighting for some of us is that theater has been connecting with an older generation. And so, again, it's that convergence where you bring people in traditional audiences in through the Shakespeare, but out with that technology, and bring that other audience in through the tech, but out with the beauty and craft of the Shakespeare. That's a really legitimate way of looking at it and how don't other any of that audience in that experience is the really important part of that.

And often, it's that aspect, the onboarding, the making sure people-- again, the technology not failing in the moment, not using technology that's inaccessible to people, all of those practical concerns which those design structures, again in the pandemic, some were exposed in the pandemic as inequitable in traditional aspects of that. Our buildings aren't always welcoming to people who don't know what to do or how to behave in the theater.

SCARLETT KIM: Yeah.

SARAH ELLIS: And We have an opportunity to address that. And I'm not saying anything is more right or less right in that, but I think it's important to highlight that-- I remember my grandma saying, the first time she heard a telephone, scared the hell out of her. Yeah.

SCARLETT KIM: Yeah.

SARAH ELLIS: As she got older, that was her social media.

SCARLETT KIM: Yeah.

GARLIA Mmm.

CORNELIA

JONES:

SARAH ELLIS: That was her technology. So we've got to really think about what's the technology for our generation. And also, people reject the technology that's not useful to them. So we got TV was a really massive huge piece of technology from the mid 1950s onwards. And again, like it became equitable, when it became more affordable, if you know what I mean, my point is now we're in those moments again with a new set of tools.

So what might be my generational technology will not be a young person's generation or technology coming through. But I always remember when she told me that. I found that really fascinating.

GARLIA

CORNELIA

JONES:

I know we have-- I know time we're going to aim to start to wrap up. I know we could be here forever. I also-- I love the fact that this conversation also seems to be revolving around the-- revolving in many ways around the democratization of access to the arts and it has me thinking a lot about the fact that all three of us work at institutions that can be seen by a lot of people as large, established, a legacy, old.

What does it mean for us to be making this change inside of such established producing orgs, especially as we think about the gatekeeping? A lot of underrepresented artists, they feel, has been a part of these legacy institutions. I know, I say--

SCARLETT KIM: Yeah, no, I'm trying to-- I'm trying to figure out how to be more polyamorous with institutions and entities. Like how I can-- love begets more love. I'm thinking about-- really recently in the past few months, I feel like my work has really centered around sharing out some of my learnings as iterative evolving.

I was talking about it in a conference that Sarah and I was just at as the loose leaf binder paper in the bottom of my backpack because that was me as a kid. Like I would just always jot down notes and it was all over the place, but it somehow made sense to me in its entropy form.

So I'm really excited about sharing out some of those learnings to the field so that we can create our own new systems. And the nonprofit theater-producing American theater system doesn't have to be the one and only centralized way of thinking about this work.

I'm excited about things like Web3 and DALLES and NFTs, all of this decentralized technology, which kind of has been co-opted by the tech bro world to make it seem like it's a nefarious thing, but I think foundationally, there's so much interesting possibility of how that can allow us empower more, decentralize and democratize collaboration.

So I think the institution-to-artist relationship, I think about that a lot in my position and how what my responsibility is. I was looking at some of our data of the artists that we engaged and thinking about, oh, we created 1,100 or so paid opportunities for artists in the theater industry in the technology industry. What does that actually mean? A lot of those jobs and gigs are bespoke titles that we made up and bespoke engagements that we made up.

But I am really excited about the economic development for the individual and for our industry. I feel like that's where really my heart, soul, and brain is.

I get excited about how can we turn-- operationalize innovation and change into tangible and sustained systems change in our organizations and in our field so that the glass cliff I feel like so many of us are often named as something in an institution or given whatever role, prestigous blah, blah, blah, and then not actually set up to succeed or thrive.

So I'm excited about all this ecstatic innovation, but I'm also like, OK, but what does it actually mean to invest in it long-term? What does it actually mean to find sustainability for innovation. So I feel like championing artists, entering artists, I think important pillar of that is sustainability.

GARLIA Earlier, Scarlett, you said something that stuck with me. You mentioned redefining what theater can be. So just
CORNELIA as we wrap up, I'm wondering what excites you the most about the next three to five years in this industry.
JONES: What's out there that you look at it and say, that's the thing that can really change the whole landscape? This is for you both.

SARAH ELLIS: I think artists. Artists are going to change it. We're going to have the tools, so there's a clearing up there. But really, what I would call like theater opening itself up to much more interdisciplinary practices that extend the reach of what theater means and what theater is about and that real network.

That over the next three to five years, if we can look at that and then the pieces around that around digital rights, multi-platform experiences, frameworks for distribution that can get out to audiences, we can look at AI or we can look at those aspects, but actually, we need a much broader sense of what theater is, if that makes any sense, through an artist lens and performance and practice.

Then that will plug into the technologies, and we need some serious, serious look at infrastructures to then deploy that to support the commerciality and the potential of that, and that's not for artists to solve, that is actually for institutions to put in place.

SCARLETT KIM: I mean, ditto.

[LAUGHTER]

We just launched an XR here on our campus for our high school-- visiting high school groups. And to me, the metric of success of that program is supporting young people and understanding that they are already making theater.

So I'm-- we just launched this project, *Hella Iambic*. It is a mobile app game that is designed to be played alongside during our performance of *Romeo and Juliet*.

And it came from this idea where Nataki, the director-- also, she directed *Romeo and Juliet*, she was talking about, well, the high school students are already using the phones in the audiences. They're already having this meta-theatrical experience of talking to each other. Like how do we actually see what's actually already happening and give radical permission for people to be themselves?

So I'm excited about, yes, artists are the future, and also, art is not this thing that is happening at the castle on the top of the hill. Art is something that is profane and mundane and a fabric of our culture and our society. And young people are making art when they make TikTok. And I am excited about continuing to democratize access to art for everyone, and I think it is critical that artists lead the way.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:**

OK. So now it's time to say goodbye for just a couple of months. It's been a whirlwind of a season, and I'm so grateful to everyone who supported the relaunch of this podcast. I'm going to try and list a few names, so please bear with me as I try not to miss anyone.

From amazing individuals like Tom McCann, Tam Shell, Julie [? Danny, ?] Amber Gray, Elizabeth Kipp-Giusti, [? Amita ?] [? Ramadan, ?] Christine Gongora, Rachel London, Chantel Thompson, [? Corinne ?] [? L.L. ?] [? Livingston, ?] [? Iva ?] [? LaFran, ?] [? Malaka ?] [? Kronberg, ?] and Emily White, our new media associate.

To our fantastic partners, The Public Theater Marketing and Communications Team, the staff at Joe's Pub, Gotham Studios where we do all of our in-studio recording sessions, and Ghostlight Creative Productions. And I cannot forget our producers, John Sloan III and Justin K. Sloan of Ghostlight Creative Productions who help make this podcast look and sound as beautiful as it does. It has been a joy to collaborate with all of you on this season.

We've been able to spend the last few months highlighting the many artists and programs of The Public Theater. So I hope you've been able to learn a bit, laugh a lot, and fall a little in love with who we try to be.

No, we don't always get it right, but there's a whole lot of people trying very hard to do so. We'll be back in a couple of months. Until then, go back and give this season a binge. I promise, you won't be disappointed. And when you do, don't forget to like, subscribe, share, shout out from the rooftops, and give us that five-star rating you know we deserve.

From everyone here on *The Public Square* team, I'm Garlia Cornelia Jones, and we'll see you next time here at *The Public Square*.

MAN: Public Theater is--

WOMAN: The Public Theater is--

MAN: The Public Theater is a gift.

MAN: To me, The Public Theater is like a neighborhood. When you live in a neighborhood or on a block, that you can go to each other's house and feel welcome. When you walk in, you feel like you're at home. That's what The Public Theater is for me.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** Welcome home to *The Public Square*. We're so glad to have you back.

ANNOUNCER: Today's episode of *Public Square 2.0* was hosted and produced by Garlia Cornelia Jones, Director of Innovation and New Media at The Public Theater, with support from new Media associate Emily White. Script by John Sloan the third and Garlia Cornelia Jones creative production includes story support by John Sloan III, Ghostlight Creative Productions, and audio production by Justin K. Sloan of Ghostlight Creative Productions.

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[UPBEAT MUSIC]