



THE BIPOC CRITICS LAB LAUNCHES FIRST COHORT AT THE PUBLIC THEATER IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FOUNDER JOSE SOLÍS

**Applications for Incoming 2023-2024 Cohort at The Public
Open Now**

Additional Theaters Invited to Join the Movement to Commission Cohort Writers

March 1, 2023 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced today it is hosting cultural critic Jose Solís' **BIPOC Critics Lab** in the 2023-2024 season. Following a successful two-year collaboration with The Kennedy Center, The Public is honored to continue founder Jose Solís' commitment to creating an educational space for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) writers in the realm of cultural criticism. Applications for the cohort are open now and will be available through **Sunday, April 30**.

Sessions for the Lab will span over the course of The Public's 2023-2024 season, and those chosen to participate will receive offers to join the cohort in mid-June, with the cohort officially beginning in July during The Public's Free Shakespeare in the Park production of **HAMLET**. This iteration of the cohort will be a hybrid model of in-person and online sessions. Applicants local to NYC or living in the tri-state area will be prioritized. For more information on The Public's iteration of the BIPOC Critics Lab and to apply, visit publictheater.org.

"I am thrilled that The Public will continue to build upon its work with the BIPOC Critics Lab as we host the next iteration during our 2023-24 season," shared Public Theater Executive Director **Patrick Willingham**. "Throughout our partnership with the Lab over the past three years, we have had the opportunity to work with Jose Solís and amplify his mission as we work to give space to and commission the next generation of cultural critics, a commitment that directly aligns with our organization-wide Cultural Transformation Plan. Hosting the Lab is a perfect next step in supporting Solís's vital work as we continue to champion diversity within arts journalism and the theater industry as a whole."

In an effort to further the movement initiated by Jose Solís and to expand both past and present cohorts' networks, The Public welcomes theaters in New York City, arts and cultural press agencies, and regional theaters around the world to collaborate with the Lab's early career BIPOC journalists for future commissioning opportunities. To learn more, please email BIPOCCriticsLab@publictheater.org.

"Since the program first began three years ago, over 30 BIPOC critics have had their works published via assignments set up by the Lab, with many of them going on to continue successful careers as freelancers, editors, and staff reporters for various outlets across the U.S.," shared founder **Jose Solís**. "The Public has been an invaluable supporter of the Lab since its inception. I'm overjoyed to be working with an arts organization that not only has kept all the promises made to the BIPOC theater community in 2020, but

has gone beyond in order to create a more inclusive field. The Public has made me feel like family and that's an indescribable feeling. With a Lab hosted and funded by them, the sky is truly the limit. ”

ABOUT THE BIPOC CRITICS LAB

The BIPOC Critics Lab was founded in 2020 by Jose Solís as a first-of-its-kind program designed to train and create work by emerging BIPOC theater journalists. Solís noticed a gap in training based on his own experience as a cultural critic in the field and created an educational space for BIPOC writers who had not been welcomed into cultural criticism, whether due to systemic oppression, lack of opportunity, or because they didn't know they were allowed to see themselves as critics. Solís solicited applicants for the first cohort through Twitter where over 100 BIPOC participants expressed interest in participating. For the last two years, The Kennedy Center has hosted the BIPOC Critics Lab online as a part of the American College Theater Festival. Alumni of the program have gone on to write and work as editors for outlets such as *The Los Angeles Times*, *Andscape*, *Elle*, *Glamour*, *American Theatre*, *Broadway News*, *3Views*, *Brooklyn Rail*, and *Token Theatre Friends*.

Since its creation, The Public has been committed to the work of the BIPOC Critics Lab, commissioning all current and alumni writers to pen features for most productions. Past commissions from former BIPOC Critics Lab members can be read at publictheater.org.

Following the tenets of dialogue, compassion, and nurturing one's unique voice, future critics who participate in the cohort will contribute to the creation of a custom program that fits their specific needs and encourages them to pursue the path of criticism that best serves them. Participating in the cohort is at no cost to members. Selected members will have the opportunity to learn all aspects of arts journalism through a variety of mediums beyond the written word. BIPOC experts in the field also serve as guest speakers for the Lab. All writers will be assigned a commissioned piece at the culmination of the program and will be compensated for their work.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC'S CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION PLAN

The Public has long operated on the principles that theater is an essential cultural force and that art and culture belong to everyone. Hosting the BIPOC Critics Lab at The Public for the 2023-2024 season aligns directly with the goals in The Public's Cultural Transformation Plan and the demands set forward in "We See You, White American Theatre." Both of these documents acknowledge that the field of arts journalism and the theater industry have historically upheld white supremacy for too long and, as a result, critics of color have been left out of the conversation. Learn more about The Public's Cultural Transformation Plan [here](#).

ABOUT JOSE SOLÍS

Jose Solís began his career as a critic at age 16 when he launched a film review website while living in Honduras, where he was born. He began writing professionally about theater while attending college in Costa Rica, and upon moving to NYC in 2012 focused entirely on the stage. His work appears in *The New York Times*, *American Theatre*, *TDF Stages*, *Backstage*, *3Views*, and *America Magazine*. In 2020 he was selected as the Floria Lasky Visiting Artist at Hunter College where he hosted the *Wed@One* series, and started the BIPOC Critics Lab, a workshop he created meant to train the cultural critics of the future. The Lab was previously hosted by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He is also the creator and host of *Token Theatre Friends*, a web series/podcast where he talks to some of the most influential theater artists working today.

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, 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. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 60 Tony Awards, 190 Obie Awards, 56 Drama Desk Awards, 59 Lortel Awards, 34 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, 62 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.

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