

**THE PUBLIC.**

**FOR IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE**

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Brontë England-Nelson



Quinn M. Johnson



Devin Kessler



Naomi Lorrain



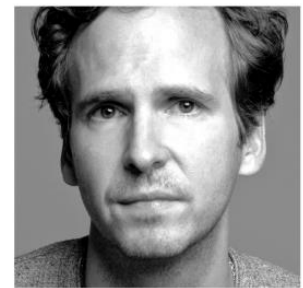
Brian Muller



Toby Onwumere



Matthew Russell



Ryan Spahn



Meg Steedle



Kai Tshikosi



Kate Walsh

**CAST AND CREATIVE HEADSHOTS**

**THE PUBLIC THEATER  
ANNOUNCES  
COMPLETE CASTING FOR  
WORLD PREMIERE OF  
*JORDANS***

**By Ife Olujobi  
Directed by Whitney White**

**Cast Includes Brontë England-Nelson, Quinn M. Johnson, Devin Kessler,  
Naomi Lorrain, Brian Muller, Toby Onwumere, Matthew Russell,  
Ryan Spahn, Meg Steedle, Kai Tshikosi, and Kate Walsh**

**Performances Begin with a Joseph Papp Free Preview Performance  
On Thursday, April 11 and Run Through Sunday, May 5:  
Official Press Opening on Wednesday, April 24**

March 4, 2024 – The Public Theater (Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director and Patrick Willingham, Executive Director) announced complete casting today for the world premiere of **JORDANS** written by Emerging Writers Group alumnus and Creatives Rebuild New York artist-in-residence **Ife Olujobi** and directed by Obie Award winner **Whitney White** (*Jaja's African Hair Braiding*). Performances begin in the LuEsther Hall with a Joseph Papp Free Preview on Thursday, April 11 and run through Sunday, May 5. The production officially opens on Wednesday, April 24.

A biting funny, wildly imaginative new play by **Ife Olujobi**, **JORDANS** is a piercing exploration of assimilation, racial capitalism, success, and survival. At an overwhelmingly white workplace where appearance is everything, a long-suffering receptionist finds herself in personal, professional, and psychic jeopardy when her ruthless boss hires a hip new employee in an effort to improve the company's image and "culture." Suddenly, the two young, Black social climbers are forced together and torn apart by their race, ambition, and otherworldly circumstances. **JORDANS** is a story of identity mistaken, power subverted, and rage unleashed. Don't miss this bold new play directed by Obie Award winner **Whitney White** about the true cost of "diversity" in the workplace.

"Being in the 2018-19 Emerging Writers Group at The Public was my introduction to the world of New York theater, and the place where I first started calling myself a playwright while I was working on the first drafts of **JORDANS**," shares playwright **Ife Olujobi**. "I am excited to be bringing this play to life at the theater where it started alongside an incredible director, Whitney White, and a very talented cast."

The cast of **JORDANS** includes **Brontë England-Nelson** (*Emma and others*), **Quinn M. Johnson** (*Understudy*), **Devin Kessler** (*Understudy*), **Naomi Lorrain** (*Jordan*), **Brian Muller** (*Fletcher and others*), **Toby Onwumere** (*1. Jordan*), **Matthew Russell** (*Fletcher and others*), **Ryan Spahn** (*Ryan and others*), **Meg Steedle** (*Maggie and others*), **Kai Tshikosi** (*Understudy*), and **Kate Walsh** (*Hailey*). Additional understudies will be announced at a later date.

The production includes scenic design by **Matt Saunders**, costume design by **Qween Jean**, lighting design by **Cha See**, sound design by **Fan Zhang**, hair and wig design by **Nikiya Mathis**, special effects design by **Lillis Meeh**, prop management by **Claire M. Kavanah**, intimacy direction by **Kelsey Rainwater**, and fight direction by **UNKLE DAVE'S FIGHT HOUSE**. **Nissy Aya** serves as the production dramaturg, with **Rachel Denise April** as production stage manager and **Eloia Peterson** as stage manager.

"The Public Theater has been incredibly influential on both my education and professional career," shares director **Whitney White**. "As an alum of the Under the Radar festival, I couldn't be more excited to be returning now to direct Ife Olujobi's brilliant play **JORDANS**. I look forward to sharing our collaboration and this world premiere with The Public Theater's audience and beyond."

Running through March 24 is the world premiere of Tony Award winner Itamar Moses' **THE ALLY**, a provocative new play directed by Drama Desk Award winner Lila Neugebauer and featuring Josh Radnor about the vanishing line between the personal and the political. Pulitzer Prize winner and writer-in-residence Suzan-Lori Parks returns with **SALLY & TOM**, an edgy dramedy about art, history, and politics, directed by Steve H. Broadnax III. While The Delacorte Theater is closed for a significant revitalization, The Public will bring free Shakespeare to parks and plazas around the city and screens around the country through **GO PUBLIC!** Mobile Unit's bilingual musical adaptation of **THE COMEDY OF ERRORS** will return for a free encore tour of the five boroughs. This joyful adaptation in English and Spanish by Rebecca Martinez and Julian Mesri combines the classic Shakespearean comedy's story of mistaken identity to life through Latin American-inspired music. Free Shakespeare in the Park's acclaimed production of **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING**, directed by Tony Award winner Kenny Leon, will screen at parks around New

York City in special evening events. This filmed version by THIRTEEN's *Great Performances*, along with their recordings of 2023's **HAMLET**, 2022's **RICHARD III**, and 2021's **MERRY WIVES**, will also be made available for streaming at home, free of charge, to audiences nationwide.

The Library serves food and drink beginning at 5:00 p.m. and closing at midnight. The Library is closed on Mondays. For more information, visit [publictheater.org](http://publictheater.org).

## **BIOS:**

**IFEOLUWA (IFE) OLUJOBI** (*Playwright*) is a Brooklyn-based Nigerian American playwright, filmmaker, and editor from Columbia, Maryland. *JORDANS* is their Off-Broadway debut. Her work has been presented at Ensemble Studio Theatre, Ars Nova, the Bushwick Starr, Manhattan Theatre Club, The Lark, and more. They received a special commendation from the 2021 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and a 2021 Steinberg Playwright Award and were an inaugural Project Number One artist-in-residence at Soho Rep. Currently, they are a Creatives Rebuild New York artist-in-residence at The Public Theater. They received their BFA in Dramatic Writing from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

**WHITNEY WHITE** she/her (*Director*) has previously directed *Macbeth in Stride* in the Under the Radar festival. Broadway credits include *Jaja's African Hair Braiding*. London credits include *The Secret Life of Bees* (The Almeida). Off-Broadway credits include *Soft* (MCC), *On Sugarland* (NYTW), *What to Send Up When it Goes Down* (The Public, ART, Woolly Mammoth), *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord* (Second Stage, WP Theatre), *For All The Women Who Thought They Were Mad* (Soho Rep), and *A Human Being of a Sort* (Williamsburg). Writing and composition credits include *Macbeth in Stride* (American Repertory Theatre) and *Semblance* (NYTW). Awards include Herb Alpert, Jerome Fellowship, and Rolex Arts Initiative. TV writing credits include Boots Riley's "I'm a Virgo" (Amazon, Media Res).

**BRONTË ENGLAND-NELSON** (*Emma and others*). Broadway credits include *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (James Earl Jones Theatre), *Three Tall Women* (understudy, Golden Theatre). Other New York credits include *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (BAM), *Acolyte* (59E59), and *McCourt* (The Chain). England-Nelson has also performed at The Public, Rattlestick, and La MaMa. Regional credits include *Detroit Red* (ArtsEmerson), *Cadillac Crew* (Yale Rep), *Kleptocracy* (Arena Stage), and *Henry IV, Part I* (Santa Cruz Shakespeare). Television credits include "Blindspot" (NBC), "FBI: Most Wanted" (CBS), "Law & Order: SVU" (NBC). She has a BA from UC Santa Cruz and an MFA from the Yale School of Drama.

**QUINN M. JOHNSON** he/him (*Understudy*). Regional credits include *Clyde's, Godspeed* (Denver Center of Performing Arts); *Clyde's* (Studio Theatre); *Much Ado About Nothing, Merchant of Venice, Our Town* (Shakespeare Theatre Company); and *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train* (Short North Stage). International credits include *The Bacchae* (International Festival of Greek Drama); *Mother Courage and Her Children, The Changeling, and The Revenger's Tragedy* (RADA). Johnson has been featured in "FBI." He received a degree from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

**DEVIN KESSLER** (*Understudy*). Based in New York City, Devin Kessler is a recent graduate of the Grad Acting program at NYU ('23). Her credits include *School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play* (Hangar Theater); *Aida* (Axelrod Performing Arts Center); *Mirror Mirror* (Williamstown Theatre Festival); *Pipeline, Three Sisters, and The Tempest* (NYU) .

**NAOMI LORRAIN** (*Jordan*) is an actor and playwright. Theater credits include *Daphne* (Lincoln Center Theater); *LA Race* (Page 73/WP); *Mark It Down, Song for a Future Generation* (Williamstown Theatre Festival); *Behind The Sheet* (Ensemble Studio Theatre, AUDELCO Award Nomination); and *What to Send Up When It Goes Down* (The Movement Theatre Company). TV includes "Orange is the New Black" (Netflix), "Elementary" (CBS), "The Good Fight" (CBS All Access), and "Madam Secretary" (CBS All Access). Lorrain is a member of the 2023 Writers Group. She was also a 2021 National Playwrights Conference Finalist at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. She also moonlights as a Research Assistant

at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Lorrain has an MFA from NYU and a BA from Yale. [www.naomilorrain.com](http://www.naomilorrain.com)

**BRIAN MULLER** (*Fletcher and others*) is thrilled to be making his Public debut! He recently starred in the Ed Burns written/produced/directed series "Bridge and Tunnel," which just ended a two-season run on EPIX. Other credits include the feature *Dating & New York*, as well as various roles on "The Deuce," "Madam Secretary," "The Good Wife," "Chicago PD," "Elementary," "Blue Bloods," "The Code," and "Instinct." He also co-hosts *The Red Flags*, a comedy podcast about Formula 1.

**TOBY ONWUMERE** (*1.Jordan*) is proud to be making his Public Theater debut in JORDANS. He will next be seen in the feature film *The Instigators* directed by Doug Liman, as well as *Das Licht* directed by Tom Tykwer. Other feature credits include *A Good Person* directed by Zach Braff and *The Matrix Resurrections* directed by Lana Wachowski. TV credits include "Sense8," "Reasonable Doubt," and "Empire." Onwumere received his BFA from the University of Evansville. He has an MFA from UCSD.

**MATTHEW RUSSELL** he/him (*Tyler and others*) previously performed at The Public in *Baldwin and Buckley at Cambridge* (ERS) and Free Shakespeare in the Park's *Much Ado About Nothing*. Broadway credits include *The Inheritance*. Off-Broadway credits include *Help*. Regional credits include *The Tempest*, *By the Queen*, *Hand to God*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Seagull*. Film credits include *Working Man*, *Some Freaks*, *Twist*, and *Man & Witch*. TV credits include "Westworld." Russell has performed with Elevator Repair Service and the Bread Loaf Acting Ensemble. He received his MFA from Brown/Trinity Rep.

**RYAN SPAHN** he/him (*Ryan and others*). Off-Broadway credits include *Merry Me* (NYTW); *Good Enemy* (Audible); *Jane Anger* (New Ohio); *Mr. Toole, How To Load A Musket* (59E59); *Daniel's Husband* (Westside); *Moscow, Moscow, Moscow, Moscow, Moscow, Moscow* (MCC); *Summer & Smoke* (CSC); *Still at Risk* (TFANC); *Exit Strategy* (Primary Stages); and *Gloria* (Vineyard). TV credits include "Zero Day" (upcoming), "AHS: Delicate," "Succession," "Modern Love," "The Bite," "Chicago P.D.," "The Blacklist." Spahn co-wrote the film *He's Way More Famous Than You* while getting his BFA from Juilliard.

**MEG STEEDLE** (*Maggie and others*) is making her Public debut. Theater credits include world premieres of David Ives' *The Heir Apparent* (Shakespeare Theatre) and Ken Ludwig's *Fox on the Fairway* directed by John Rando (Signature Theatre). TV credits include HBO's "Boardwalk Empire" (SAG Award nomination for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series), "Mr. Mercedes" (Peacock), and "Mysteries of Laura" (NBC). Steedle received a Cine Golden Eagle Award for Narrative Short Film (2018) and was a 2019 finalist for Screencraft Film Fund (*Pop Screen*, an original musical film). [meg-steedle.com](http://meg-steedle.com)

**KAI TSHIKOSI** (*Understudy*). Theater credits at Trinity Rep include *Sweeney Todd*, *black odyssey*, *The Prince of Providence* (understudy), and *By the Queen* (assistant director). Brown/Trinity Rep MFA credits include *The Book of Lucy*, *Mr. Burns*, *A Post Electric Play*, *Angels in America*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Bathhouse.ppt*, and *On the Y-Axis*. Selected regional credits include *Romeo and Juliet* (Huntington Theater Company); *Romeo and Juliet* (Commonwealth Shakespeare Company); *black odyssey boston* (Front Porch Theater Collective/Central Square Theater); *Macbeth*, *Equivocation*, *The Tempest* (Actors' Shakespeare Project); *Franklin* (Boston Playwrights' Theatre); *Colossal* (Company One); and *Cyclops: A Satyr Play* (OBERON/ART). Tshikosi has an MFA in Acting from Brown/Trinity Rep. Other: Tshikosi is proud to reprise his role as the best son of the best mama in the whole universe. [tshikosi.com](http://tshikosi.com). IG: @thesupremekai.

**KATE WALSH** (*Hailey*) is widely known for playing Dr. Addison Montgomery on the ABC dramas "Private Practice" and "Grey's Anatomy." Her theater credits include *Mary Stuart* (Perth International Theatre Festival); *The Other Place* (Fremantle Theatre Company); *If I Forget* (Roundabout; Drama Desk and Drama League Award nominations); *Dusk Rings a Bell* (Atlantic); *Born Guilty*, *Moon Under Miami*, and *Troilus and Cressida* (Shakespeare Rep). Other TV credits include "Emily in Paris" (Madeline Wheeler), "Sprung"

(Paula Tackleberry), “The Umbrella Academy” (The Handler), and “13 Reasons Why” (Olivia Baker). Film credits include *Honest Thief*, *Almost Love*, *Sometime Other Than Now*, *Girl’s Trip*, *#RealityHigh*, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *Angel’s Crest*, and *Mark Felt: The Man Who Brought Down the White House*. Walsh has had additional series regular roles on “The Mike O’Malley Show,” “The Mind of a Married Man,” “The Drew Carey Show,” “Bad Judge,” “Fargo,” and “Legion.” Walsh is also the founder of the award-winning lifestyle beauty company, Boyfriend®.

## **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 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 spring 2024 productions of *Suffs* and *Hell’s Kitchen*. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 60 Tony Awards, 194 Obie Awards, 57 Drama Desk Awards, 61 Lortel Awards, 36 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics’ Circle Awards, 65 AUDELCO Awards, 6 Antonyo Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. [publictheater.org](http://publictheater.org)

The Public Theater stands in honor of the first people 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**

**JORDANS** begins performances in the LuEsther Hall on Thursday, April 11 and runs through Sunday, May 5, with an official press opening on Wednesday, April 24.

Public Theater Partner, Supporter, and full-price single tickets can be accessed by visiting [publictheater.org](http://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 Thursday, April 11 through TodayTix. The lottery will open for entries on Thursday, April 4 and will close at 12:00 p.m. 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 7:30 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday at 1:30 p.m.

The **Open Captioned** performance will be at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 4. The **Audio Described** performance will be at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 5.

The full performance calendar can be found at [publictheater.org](http://publictheater.org).

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