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[press@publictheater.org](mailto:press@publictheater.org)

PRESS KIT

**THE PUBLIC THEATER  
ANNOUNCES  
SHAKESPEARE FOR THE CITY  
SUMMER 2026 PROGRAMMING  
PRESENTED BY CITIZENS**

**Free Shakespeare in the Park's 63rd Season**

**ROMEO AND JULIET**

**By William Shakespeare**

**Directed by Saheem Ali**

**THE WINTER'S TALE**

**By William Shakespeare**

**Directed by Daniel Sullivan**

**Revitalized Delacorte Belongs to All New Yorkers**

**with Expanded Programming Free, For All, Forever**

**PUBLIC WORKS Features New Yorkers Onstage**

**PUBLIC FORUM Series to Open Doors on Mondays**

**Free Mobile Unit Production to Tour Five Boroughs**

**AS YOU LIKE IT**

**By William Shakespeare**

**Directed by Emma Rosa Went**

**JL Greene Celebrates Two-Year Commitment to Delacorte Reopening**

November 19, 2025 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) proudly announces 2026 **SHAKESPEARE FOR THE CITY** presented by Citizens, including Free Shakespeare in the Park's **ROMEO AND JULIET** and **THE WINTER'S TALE** and Public Works at the newly revitalized Delacorte Theater as well as the touring Mobile Unit's **AS YOU LIKE IT** beginning in May 2026. The Delacorte will welcome more audiences than ever with Monday evenings hosting the revival of the **PUBLIC FORUM** series, which blends performance, conversation, and culture.

“‘Shakespeare for the City’ represents our bold legacy and vision of cultural and civic life for the people of this city. Last summer, with the revitalized Delacorte Theater at the movement’s epicenter, more than 80,000 New Yorkers across all five boroughs found their place together, affirming that The Public’s Free Shakespeare in the Park, Public Works, Mobile Unit, and Public Forum are not just programs—they are a declaration of interdependence, a reassertion that culture belongs to everyone,” said The Public’s Executive Director **Patrick Willingham**.

"For the first time in 19 years, Saheem Ali brings Shakespeare's beloved romance *Romeo and Juliet* back to The Delacorte. The most famous love story of all time makes a powerful case that love can heal even the most divided communities. And Dan Sullivan returns with Shakespeare's late masterpiece of faith and resurrection, *The Winter's Tale*," shared Artistic Director **Oskar Eustis**. "The summer of 2026 will also feature the explosive return of Public Forum. Under the leadership of **Alexa Smith** and **Jeremy McCarter**, The Delacorte will become the greatest Town Hall in America, hosting artists and thinkers, thrilling conversations and intense debates, in a theater of ideas that will showcase everything that makes New York unique."

### **SHAKESPEARE FOR THE CITY PROGRAMMING INCLUDES:**

#### **FREE SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK**

##### **ROMEO AND JULIET**

Directed by **Saheem Ali**

The Public's Associate Artistic Director/Resident Director **Saheem Ali** brings Shakespeare's legendary star-crossed lovers to Central Park. Never was there a story of more woe, or romance, than the Bard's tale of two lovers from warring families. In rapture at first sight, Romeo and Juliet defy their families' bitter hatred and the bloodshed on the streets of Verona, determined to consecrate their passion with a secret marriage. Don't miss this ravishing new production, essential viewing for any lover of Shakespeare, theater, and love itself.

#### **FREE SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK**

##### **THE WINTER'S TALE**

Directed by **Daniel Sullivan**

Tony Award-winning director **Daniel Sullivan** returns to Free Shakespeare in the Park with a spellbinding new production of **THE WINTER'S TALE**. When the King of Sicilia becomes convinced his pregnant wife has been unfaithful, the royal baby is smuggled to the coast of Bohemia where an old shepherd finds her and renames her Perdita. Sixteen years later, Perdita falls in love with another young shepherd, Doricles, who turns out to be a prince in disguise. Honesty is a fool and true love the only answer in this mysterious, romantic tale of defiance and destiny.

#### **MOBILE UNIT**

##### **AS YOU LIKE IT**

Directed by **Emma Rosa Went**

Bringing free Shakespeare to parks and correctional facilities across the city, The Public's acclaimed Mobile Unit will tour in 2026 with a joyful new production of **AS YOU LIKE IT**. When Duke Frederick exiles her father, Rosalind and her cousin Celia flee to the forest. Disguised as a young man, Rosalind encounters the heart-sick Orlando, who is desperately seeking none other than Rosalind. While the two young lovers role-play their way back into each other's arms, the forest of Arden is abuzz with lovelorn shepherds, pining jesters, and battling brothers. True lovers, strange capers, and fools in the forest go heart-in-heart in Shakespeare's classic romantic comedy, directed by **Emma Rosa Went**.

#### **PUBLIC WORKS**

Returns to The Delacorte Theater in August 2026

Title and creative team to be announced soon

**PUBLIC WORKS**, a major civic artistic program of The Public Theater, aims to restore and build community by connecting people through the creation of extraordinary works of art.

Director of Civic Artistic Programs **Pablo Hernandez Basulto** shared, “We see a city hungry for civic connection. A city facing challenges so vast they can only be met through collective effort. Our goal is to create artistic spaces that build momentum toward a greater sense of interdependence among New Yorkers, beginning with our Mobile Unit tour of *AS YOU LIKE IT*. This tour will carry the Forest of Arden to all five boroughs, from our most isolated neighbors inside correctional facilities to our most cherished neighborhood parks. And, at a moment when New York’s very identity is a matter of national conversation, Public Works will bring together New Yorkers across the city to create our first-ever original production at The Delacorte.”

**Citizens** returns as the presenting partner of **Shakespeare for the City**, free summer programming that brings world-class theater to audiences across New York City. Citizens’ support helps ensure more communities across New York are able to enjoy free Shakespeare throughout the summer including Free Shakespeare in the Park ticket distributions at Citizens branches in all five boroughs on select dates.

“Shakespeare for the City is more than a tradition—it’s an iconic staple that reflects the heartbeat and vibrant spirit of New York,” said **Rebecca O’Connell**, NYC Metro Market President, Citizens. “We look forward to our continued partnership with The Public Theater to support their summer programming and help expand access so that more New Yorkers can experience the magic of live theater.”

As part of its longstanding commitment to making the arts affordable, accessible, and world-class for all New Yorkers, the **Jerome L. Greene Foundation** proudly supports Free Shakespeare in the Park. Through partnerships with leading institutions and organizations, the Foundation advances democracy, justice, and equality; broadens access to education through scholarship; and strengthens medical innovation through research.

“We are thrilled to partner with The Public Theater on Free Shakespeare in the Park,” said **Chris McInerney**, President and CEO of the Jerome L. Greene Foundation. “The Public’s commitment to bringing outstanding, free theater to New Yorkers makes it an irreplaceable cultural treasure.”

## **BIOS**

**SAHEEM ALI** (*Romeo and Juliet Director*) is a proud immigrant from Kenya, currently serving as the Associate Artistic Director/ Resident Director of New York’s Public Theater. He is a two-time Tony Award nominee, for *Buena Vista Social Club* and *Fat Ham*, the latter of which also earned the Joe A. Callaway Award and Drama Desk and Lucille Lortel nominations. He is the recipient of an Obie Award for Sustained Excellence in Directing. His productions of *Twelfth Night* and *Merry Wives* (Free Shakespeare in the Park) were recorded for PBS’ “Great Performances,” and *Merry Wives* as the subject of the HBO documentary *Reopening Night*. Productions include *Goddess* (The Public Theater, Berkeley Rep), *Good Bones* (The Public Theater), *Nollywood Dreams* (MCC), *Fires in the Mirror* (Signature Theatre), *The Rolling Stone* (Lincoln Center Theater), *Passage* (Soho Rep), and *Sugar in Our Wounds* (MTC). He is a Sir John Gielgud SDCF Fellow and a Shubert Fellow.

**DANIEL SULLIVAN** (*The Winter’s Tale Director*) At The Public Theater’s Shakespeare in the Park: *Coriolanus*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Cymbeline*, *King Lear*, *Comedy of Errors*, *As You Like It*, *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Among his Broadway credits are *The Nap*; *Stories By Heart*; *Saint Joan*; *Sylvia*; *The Country House*; *The Snow Geese*; *Orphans*; *Glengarry Glen Ross*; *The Columnist*; *Good People*; *Time Stands Still*; *Accent on Youth*; *The Homecoming*; *Prelude to a Kiss*; *Rabbit Hole*; *After the Night and the Music*; *Julius Caesar*; *Brooklyn Boy*; *Sight Unseen*; *I’m Not Rappaport*; *Morning’s at Seven*; *Proof*; the 2000 production of *A Moon for the Misbegotten*; *Ah, Wilderness!*; *The Sisters Rosensweig*; *Conversations With My Father*; and *The Heidi Chronicles*. Henry IV at the Shakespeare Center of Los Angeles. Among his Off-Broadway credits are *If I Forget*, *The Night Watcher*, *Intimate Apparel*, *Far East*, *Spinning Into Butter*, *Stuff Happens*, *Dinner With Friends* and *The Substance of Fire*. From 1981 to 1997, he served as artistic director of Seattle

Repertory Theatre. Sullivan was a Swanlund Professor in the College of Fine Arts at the University of Illinois, Urbana for 25 years.

**EMMA ROSA WENT** (As You Like It *Director*) is currently on staff as the inaugural Directing Fellow at The Public Theater and the director of *Initiative* by Else Went, currently making its world premiere at The Public. Other works with Else: *Degenerates* (workshops at Playwrights Horizons, The Public, Ars Nova, NYTW), *An Oxford Man* (workshops at MTC, South Coast Rep), *I Am the Most Beautiful Bird* (workshops with Breaking the Binary, Mercury Store). Classical work includes: *Romeo and Juliet* (Hudson Valley Shakespeare, Tour '23); *Much Ado About Nothing* (Opera House Arts); *Two Noble Kinsmen* (HVS Commission, Public Shakespeare Initiative Residency); and ongoing work with Will Frears on *Hamlet* at Mercury Store & Coffey St. Studio. Drama League alum. SDC member. Rep: WME. [emmagwent.com](http://emmagwent.com)

### **ABOUT FREE SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK**

Since its inception, over six million people have enjoyed more than 160 free productions of Shakespeare and other classical works and musicals at The Delacorte Theater. Conceived by founder Joseph Papp to make great theater accessible to all, Free Shakespeare in the Park continues to be the bedrock of The Public's vision of artistic excellence and free access to culture.

The Public has launched "Forever Public," an ambitious, multi-year capital campaign with a goal of raising over \$175 million to secure the transformative mission of free theater for everyone. In addition to establishing the Fund for Free Theater endowment, Forever Public provided capital support to make the Delacorte revitalization possible.

Built in 1962, the theater had not undergone meaningful capital upgrades since 1999. The Public, in partnership with the Central Park Conservancy, NYC Parks, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and Ennead Architects, created a design and construction plan that minimized impact on Central Park and foregrounded resilience and sustainability to ensure the longevity of Free Shakespeare in the Park for many years to come.

Following groundbreaking in October 2023, reconstruction of interior spaces and the grandstand layout began with subsequent installation of redesigned lighting towers and the new wood façade made from salvaged NYC water towers. Concurrently, the Central Park Conservancy renovated the Delacorte Restroom. The revitalized Delacorte reopened in summer 2025 and offers a state-of-the-art experience for audiences, artists, and staff alike with improved access for people living with disabilities.

The Delacorte project is publicly and privately funded with \$42 million contributed by the New York City Mayor, City Council, and Manhattan Borough President, as well as \$1 million from New York Assembly Member O'Donnell. The Public also wishes to acknowledge State Senator Brad Hoylman-Signal and NYC Parks who have contributed funding to the Central Park Conservancy's Delacorte restroom renovation project.

### **ABOUT CIVIC ARTISTIC PROGRAMS**

Civic Artistic Programs is The Public Theater's hub for furthering our access, civic engagement, and community focused artistic innovation, focused on building connections with community organizations and their members.

Now in its 16th season, The Public Theater's **MOBILE UNIT** is a modern reimagining of Joseph Papp's Mobile Theater. Mobile Unit reaches across economic and geographic barriers to the arts by meeting our communities where they are—staging free professional theater productions and programs in local neighborhood venues such as libraries, homeless shelters, correctional facilities, and community centers across all five New York City boroughs. Mobile Unit has served thousands of audiences with critically acclaimed productions, including a 2018 National tour of Lynn Nottage's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Sweat*. In 2020, Mobile Unit received a Special Drama Desk Award for its program. During the pandemic, Mobile Unit launched a digital workshop inside the NYC Department of Corrections called *Hip-Hop vs.*

*Shakespeare*, where participants were encouraged to write their own stories. In summer 2021, Mobile Unit returned in-person with *Mobile Unit's Summer of Joy*, co-produced with National Black Theatre, popping up at public plazas in neighborhoods hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. Mobile Unit believes theater is its most powerful when it reflects and connects to the lives of our community.

**PUBLIC WORKS**, a major artistic program of the Public Theater, aims to restore and build community by connecting people through the creation of extraordinary works of art. Public Works is animated by the idea that theater is a place of possibility, where the boundaries that separate us from each other in the rest of life can fall away. Working with partner organizations in all five boroughs, Public Works invites community members to take classes, participate in programming, attend performances, and join in the creation of ambitious works of participatory theater. Public Works deliberately blurs the line between professional artists and community members, creating theater that is not only for the people, but by and of the people as well. Public Works exemplifies The Public's long-standing commitment to putting community at the core of the theater's mission. Public Works seeks to create a space where we can not only reflect on the world as it is, but where we can propose new possibilities for what our society might be. The Public Works model continues to be adopted by theaters across the country and around the world. The Public Works community partner organizations are **Brownsville Recreation Center** (Brooklyn), **Casita Maria Center for Arts and Education** (Bronx), **Center for Family Life in Sunset Park** (Brooklyn), **Children's Aid** (all boroughs), **DreamYard** (Bronx), **Domestic Workers United** (all boroughs), **The Fortune Society** (Queens), and **Military Resilience Foundation** (all boroughs).

#### **ABOUT CITIZENS FINANCIAL GROUP, INC.**

Citizens Financial Group, Inc. is one of the nation's oldest and largest financial institutions, with \$222.7 billion in assets as of September 30, 2025. Headquartered in Providence, Rhode Island, Citizens offers a broad range of retail and commercial banking products and services to individuals, small businesses, middle-market companies, large corporations and institutions. Citizens helps its customers reach their potential by listening to them and by understanding their needs in order to offer tailored advice, ideas and solutions. In Consumer Banking, Citizens provides an integrated experience that includes mobile and online banking, a full-service customer contact center and the convenience of approximately 3,100 ATMs and approximately 1,000 branches in 14 states and the District of Columbia. Consumer Banking products and services include a full range of banking, lending, savings, wealth management and small business offerings. In Commercial Banking, Citizens offers a broad complement of financial products and solutions, including lending and leasing, deposit and treasury management services, foreign exchange, interest rate and commodity risk management solutions, as well as loan syndication, corporate finance, merger and acquisition, and debt and equity capital markets capabilities. More information is available at [www.citizensbank.com](http://www.citizensbank.com) or visit us on [X](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Facebook](#).

#### **ABOUT JEROME L. GREENE FOUNDATION**

The Jerome L. Greene Foundation supports select programs that make a significant impact on the lives of all New Yorkers in the areas of the arts, education, medicine, and social justice. Its 40-year history is grounded in the vision of its founder, Jerry Greene, to give back to the city he loved. Today, the Foundation honors this commitment by continuing to fund quality programs and by identifying new ways to increase access to the arts and to education, create opportunities for ground-breaking medical research, and help ensure social justice for all. [www.jlgreenefoundation.org](http://www.jlgreenefoundation.org)

**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 Works, 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 musicals *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda and *Hell's Kitchen* by Alicia Keys and Kristoffer Diaz. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 64 Tony Awards, 195 Obie Awards, 62 Drama Desk Awards, 64 Lortel Awards, 36 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, 72 AUDELCO Awards, 6 Antionyo Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. [publictheater.org](http://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 Public also gives our respect to the people of Seneca Village, a community of Black property owners who were removed from their land and whose village was destroyed in the creation of Central Park. We recognize the sacrifice that these ancestors made and honor Seneca Village's legacy.

**Citizens** is the presenting partner of SHAKESPEARE FOR THE CITY.

**Jerome L. Greene Foundation** is the proud season sponsor of Free Shakespeare in the Park.

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