



PHOTOS: REVITALIZED DELACORTE RENDERINGS

PHOTOS: INITIAL CAST HEADSHOTS

VIDEO: CASTING ANNOUNCEMENT

## THE PUBLIC THEATER ANNOUNCES INITIAL CASTING FOR *TWELFTH NIGHT*; GRAND RETURN OF FREE SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK AT REVITALIZED DELACORTE THEATER IN 2025

By William Shakespeare

Directed by Saheem Ali

**Initial Casting Includes Public Alumni**

**Peter Dinklage, Jesse Tyler Ferguson, Lupita Nyong'o, and Sandra Oh**

July 25, 2024 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced initial casting today for **TWELFTH NIGHT**, directed by The Public's Associate Artistic Director/Resident Director **Saheem Ali**, which will reopen the revitalized Delacorte Theater in **August 2025**. At long last, Free Shakespeare in the Park will return to its home with an all-star cast of Public Theater alumni.

Join us to revel in the midsummer madness as twins Sebastian and Viola survive shipwreck, revenge plots, and the trick doors of love. The Public's Associate Artistic Director and Resident Director, Tony Award nominee **Saheem Ali** directs this joyful romp welcoming all of New York back to the magic of Central Park's beloved theater. Be there when the stage lights turn on again at The Delacorte—a New York City classic—with this high-powered production of the Bard's classic comedy.

Initial casting for **TWELFTH NIGHT** includes **Peter Dinklage** (*Malvolio*), **Jesse Tyler Ferguson** (*Andrew Aguecheek*), **Lupita Nyong'o** (*Viola*), and **Sandra Oh** (*Olivia*). Additional casting and creative team details will be announced this fall.

"**TWELFTH NIGHT** is the epitome of joy," shares director of the upcoming production and Public Theater Associate Artistic Director/Resident Director **Saheem Ali**. "It also happens to be the first production I ever saw at The Delacorte, as a college student taking the Chinatown bus from Boston. I'm delighted to be reuniting with my dear friend **Lupita Nyong'o**, joined by fellow Public Theater alums **Peter Dinklage**, **Jesse Tyler Ferguson**, and **Sandra Oh**. Free Shakespeare in the Park is a gift to our city. I'm honored to be helping this production as we reopen The Delacorte after an extensive and essential revitalization."

This production of Free Shakespeare in the Park's **TWELFTH NIGHT** will be the seventh time Shakespeare's classic comedy has been produced at The Delacorte. Previous iterations were produced in 1969 (directed by founder Joseph Papp), 1986, 1989, 2002, 2009, and an adaptation for Public Works

in 2018. These four actors join the ranks of several celebrated performers who have played these roles on The Delacorte stage including Tom Aldredge, Barbara Barrie, Michael Cumptsy, Jeff Goldblum, Kim Greist, Anne Hathaway, Nikki M. James, Andrew Kober, Hamish Linklater, Peter MacNicol, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Audra McDonald, Kathryn Meisle, Michelle Pfeiffer, Sasha von Scherler, Fisher Stevens, Julia Stiles, Michael Stuhlbarg, and more.

Since its inception, over six million people have enjoyed more than 150 free productions of Shakespeare and other classical works and musicals at The Delacorte Theater. Conceived by founder Joseph Papp as a way to make great theater accessible to all, The Public's Free Shakespeare in the Park continues to be the bedrock of the Company's mission to increase access and engage the community. The revitalization of The Delacorte will ensure the longevity of Free Shakespeare in the Park for many years to come.

The long-overdue Delacorte revitalization will provide upgraded and more comfortable conditions for staff, artists, and audiences alike, modernized back-of-house theatrical operations, and ensure equitable access for people living with disabilities. The Public worked with stakeholders in Central Park and the surrounding neighborhoods as well as design experts to create a design and construction plan that minimizes impact on the Park.

Built in 1962, the theater has not undergone meaningful capital upgrades since 1999. The design comprehensively addresses the theater's code and life safety needs, makes core improvements to infrastructure and backstage efficiency, and makes substantial upgrades to support its theatrical program. The improvements also include a revitalized exterior for a more dynamic aesthetic experience, and a focus on resilience and sustainability. The design maintains The Delacorte's current form, footprint, and views within the Park while protecting the sanctity of the theater-in-the-park experience.

Breaking ground last fall, extensive work has occurred throughout the facility with the demolition of existing seats, risers, and façade, as well as work done to address structural issues for the remaining building. Significant progress has been made towards the reconstruction of interior spaces and the grandstand layout to provide more accessible seating. Major work will continue into the fall with the installation of redesigned lighting towers, grandstand risers, and the new wood façade made from salvaged NYC water towers. Concurrently, the Central Park Conservancy is renovating the Delacorte Restroom, slated for completion alongside the theater renovation.

The Delacorte will reopen to all New Yorkers next summer. For more information on The Delacorte's revitalization, visit [thepublic.nyc/Delacorte-Revitalization](https://thepublic.nyc/Delacorte-Revitalization).

Ticketing information and dates for the production will be made available in 2025.

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## **BIOS:**

**SAHEEM ALI** (*Director*) is a proud immigrant from Kenya, currently serving as the Associate Artistic Director/Resident Director of New York's Public Theater. He received Tony, Drama Desk and Lucille Lortel nominations, as well as the Joe A. Callaway award for his direction of *Fat Ham*. He most recently developed the *Buena Vista Social Club* musical at Atlantic Theater Company (Drama Desk nom). His production of *Merry Wives* (Free Shakespeare in the Park) was recorded for PBS' "Great Performances" and was the subject of the HBO documentary *Reopening Night*. Other productions include *Goddess* (Berkeley Rep); *Nollywood Dreams* (MCC); *Romeo y Julieta*, *Shipwreck*, and *Richard II* (radio plays); *Fires in the Mirror* (Signature Theater); *The Rolling Stone* (Lincoln Center Theater); *Passage* (Soho Rep); *Sugar in Our Wounds* (MTC); *Tartuffe* (Playmakers Rep); *Where Storms Are Born* (Williamstown); and *Kill Move Paradise* (National Black Theater). He is a Usual Suspect at New York Theater Workshop, a Sir John Gielgud SDCF Fellow, a Shubert Fellow, and the recipient of an Obie Award for Sustained Excellence in Directing.

**PETER DINKLAGE** (*Malvolio*) is an award-winning actor in film, television and theater. He is most recognizable for his Emmy® Award-winning performance as “Tyrion Lannister” in “Game of Thrones,” for which he won a record four Emmy Awards and a Golden Globe Award. Dinklage’s breakout role came in 2003 with the Sundance Film Festival Audience Award–winner *The Station Agent*. Since then, he has starred in the numerous films including *X-Men: Days of Future Past*, *Death at a Funeral*, *Living in Oblivion*, *I Think We’re Alone Now*, *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, *Avengers: Infinity War*, *I Care a Lot*, *My Dinner with Hervé*, *Cyrano*, *She Came to Me*, *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, *American Dreamer*, and *Unfrosted: The Pop Tart Story*. Upcoming films include *The Thicket*, *Brothers*, *Wicked*, and *The Toxic Avenger*. His extensive theater credits include *A Month in the Country*, *Things We Want*, *Knickerbocker*, *Richard III*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *Cyrano*.

**JESSE TYLER FERGUSON** (*Andrew Aguecheek*) has previously performed in The Public/Free Shakespeare in the Park productions of *On the Town*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *The Tempest*. Broadway credits include *Take Me Out* (Tony Award), *Fully Committed*, and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Ferguson earned 5 Emmy nominations for his role on “Modern Family.” Recent film credits include *Cocaine Bear* and *All That We Love* (Tribeca Film Festival). He is the host of the podcast *Dinners on Me*, the author of the cookbook *Food Between Friends*, and the cofounder of Pronoun, a foundation fighting oppression in the LGBTQIA+ community.

**LUPITA NYONG’O** (*Viola*) is a Kenyan actress, producer, and *New York Times* bestselling author. She made her feature debut in Steve McQueen’s Academy Award® winning film *12 Years a Slave*. For her performance, Nyong’o received the Academy Award®, the Screen Actors Guild® Award, the Critics’ Choice Award, the Independent Spirit Award, and the NAACP Image Award. Nyong’o stars in Paramount’s *A Quiet Place: Day One*, written and directed by Michael Sarnoski. The film released in June to critical acclaim and was the most successful debut in the blockbuster franchise. In September, Nyong’o will star in DreamWorks Animation’s feature film *The Wild Robot*, written and directed by Chris Sanders. Among her film roles, Nyong’o plays “Nakia” in Marvel’s Oscar-nominated *Black Panther* franchise. In Jordan Peele’s critically acclaimed *Us*, Nyong’o appeared as both “Adelaide” and “Red,” earning her a Screen Actors Guild nomination, the NY Film Critics Association Award for Best Actress, and an NAACP Image Award. For her Broadway debut in Danai Gurira’s play, *Eclipsed*, Nyong’o earned a Tony nomination. In 2021 she played “Julietta” in The Public Theater’s bilingual (Spanish and English) audio adaptation of *Romeo y Julieta* for Tony-nominated director Saheem Ali.

**SANDRA OH** (*Olivia*) (OC) is an award-winning television and film actor. A graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada, her theatre credits include this year’s *The Welkin* at The Atlantic, *Stop Kiss* and *Satellites* at The Public, *Oleanna*, *Death and the Maiden*, *House of Bernarda Alba*, and *Office Hour*. Oh is best known for her roles as Cristina Yang in “Grey’s Anatomy,” Eve Polastri in “Killing Eve,” and Ji-Yoon Kim in “The Chair.” Oh’s film credits include *Sideways*, *Under the Tuscan Sun*, *Last Night*, and *Double Happiness*. Her extensive voice work includes “Invincible,” *Turning Red*, and *The Tiger’s Apprentice*. Oh’s recent projects include the Emmy-nominated Hulu film *Quiz Lady* and HBO’s “The Sympathizer.” She will be in the upcoming films *Good Fortune* and *Can I Get A Witness*.

### **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 musicals *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Suffs* by Shaina Taub, 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, 194 Obie Awards, 62 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 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.

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

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