

**THE PUBLIC THEATER
ANNOUNCES
COMPLETE CASTING
FOR NEW YORK PREMIERE OF
PARTY PEOPLE
BY UNIVERSES**

**Steven Sapp, Mildred Ruiz-Sapp,
and William Ruiz a.k.a. Ninja**

**Developed and Directed by Liesl Tommy
Choreography by Millicent Johnnie**

Performances Begin November 1

September 20, 2016 - The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced complete casting today for the New York Premiere of ***PARTY PEOPLE*** by UNIVERSES (Steven Sapp, Mildred Ruiz-Sapp, and William Ruiz a.k.a. Ninja. Developed and directed by **Liesl Tommy** with choreography by **Millicent Johnnie**, ***PARTY PEOPLE*** begins performances on Tuesday, November 1 and runs through Sunday, December 4, with an official press opening on Tuesday, November 15.

The complete cast of ***PARTY PEOPLE*** features **Oberon K.A. Adjepong** (*Blue*); **Michael Elich** (*Marcus, FBI Agent*); **Gizel Jimenez** (*Clara*); **Ramona Keller** (*Amira*); **Christopher Livingston** (*Malik*); **Jesse J. Perez** (*Tito*); **Sophia Ramos** (*Maruca*); **Robynn Rodriguez** (*Donna, Fina*); **Horace V. Rogers** (*Solias*); **William Ruiz a.k.a. Ninja** (*Jimmy "Primo"*); **Mildred Ruiz-Sapp** (*Helita*); and **Steven Sapp** (*Omar*).

Post-show talkbacks with the creative team are scheduled to take place immediately following every performance, starting on Wednesday, November 16. There will be an additional talkback after the Thursday, November 10 performance. Post-show Speaker Series will be held on Sunday, November 20 after the matinee and Sunday, December 4.

Public Theater Member, Partner tickets, and single tickets starting at \$60, can be accessed now by calling **(212) 967-7555**, www.publictheater.org, or in person at the Taub Box Office at The Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street. The Library at The Public is open nightly for food and drinks, beginning at 5:00 p.m., and Joe's Pub at The Public continues to offer some of the best music in the city.

Continuing The Public's mission to make great theater accessible to all, The Public's First Performance "Free for All" returns this fall; free tickets to the first preview on Tuesday, November 1 will be available beginning October 25, via TodayTix mobile lottery. \$20 tickets will be available for all public performances through a TodayTix Mobile Lottery.

The Library at The Public is open nightly for food and drinks, beginning at 5:00 p.m., and Joe's Pub at The Public continues to offer some of the best music in the city.

UNIVERSES, the award-winning ensemble known for their fusion of theater, poetry, jazz, hip-hop, politics, down home blues and Spanish boleros, makes their Public Theater premiere with an explosive new work about the complicated legacies of the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords Org/Party. Directed and developed by Tony Award nominee Liesl Tommy, UNIVERSES created **PARTY PEOPLE** based on dozens of interviews with members of these groundbreaking, society-changing groups. **PARTY PEOPLE** imagines a present-day reunion at an art opening curated by two young counter culturalists; but the curators themselves have complex relationships with the Party members, who fought injustice and provided free food and medical care for their communities—often at the expense of the people who loved them most. Old wounds and generational divides collide in this astonishing, multi-media theatrical event about the price of being a revolutionary, and what it means for those who come after. Breaking the bounds of the expected, the members of UNIVERSES (Steven Sapp, Mildred Ruiz-Sapp and William Ruiz aka Ninja) and Liesl Tommy —invite audiences of every age, color and creed to join them as they continue to revolutionize American theater and explore the fight to bring power to the people, and the people to power.

PARTY PEOPLE features scenic and lighting design by Marcus Doshi, costume design by Meg Neville, sound design and vocal direction by Broken Chord, music composition UNIVERSES and Broken Chord, projection design by Sven Ortel, and hair and wig design by Cookie Jordan.

UNIVERSES (Steven Sapp, Mildred Ruiz-Sapp, and William Ruiz a.k.a. Ninja) (*Creators*) is a National Ensemble Theater Company, of multi-disciplined writers and performers, who fuse theater, poetry, dance, jazz, hip hop, politics, down home blues and Spanish boleros to create moving, challenging and entertaining works for the stage. Founded in the Bronx, New York in 1995, the original members of UNIVERSES came together in the urban poetry and music scene of the late 1990s; quickly moving through the “downtown” performance scene, to build a home for themselves in American theatre. In their 21 Years, they have taken their original works around the world, electrifying crowds and sparking conversations about just what it means to be an American citizen: right here and right now. The group breaks the traditional theatrical bounds to create its own brand of theater; inviting old and new generations of theater crafters as well as theater goers and new comers to revolutionize American theater.

LIESL TOMMY (*Developed and Director*) is an award-winning international theater director whose work for The Public includes *Eclipsed*, which she also directed on Broadway, earning her a Tony nomination; *The Good Negro*; and *The Urban Retreat* (Public Studio). Her World premieres include *A Melancholy Play* by Sarah Ruhl and Todd Almond; *Kid Victory* by John Kander and Greg Pierce; *Appropriate* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins; *Party People* by Universes, *The White Man – A Complex Declaration of Love* by Joan Rang; *Peggy Picket Sees the Face of God* by Roland Schimmelpfennig; *Eclipsed* by Danai Gurira; *A History of Light* by Eisa Davis; *Angela’s Mixtape* by Eisa Davis; *Bus* and *Family Ties*. Tommy’s additional credits include award-winning re-interpretations of *Les Miserables*, *Hamlet*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Piano Lesson*, and *Ma Raney’s Black Bottom* as well as a four-city tour of *Ruined*. She has worked at DTC, California Shakespeare Theater, Centerstage, Sundance East Africa, Berkeley Rep., Oregon Shakespeare Festival, La Jolla Playhouse, and Huntington Theatre Company, among others. Tommy is Associate Director at Berkeley Rep, serves as a Program Associate at Sundance Institute Theatre Program and as an Artist Trustee with the Sundance Institute’s Board of Trustees. Tommy facilitated the inaugural Sundance East Africa Theater Director’s Lab in In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She’s earned an Obie award, Pioneer of the Arts Award, Lillian Hellman award, Alan Schneider award, the inaugural Susan Stroman Award, an NEA/TCG Directors Grant, and NYTW Casting/Directing Fellowship. She has taught or guest directed at Yale Rep, Juilliard, NYU, and Brown University. Tommy is an alum of Trinity Rep Conservatory and a native of Cape Town, South Africa.

OBERON K.A. ADJEPONG (*Blue*) has appeared in *Pericles* at TFANA; *12 Angry Men*; *Tamburlain 1 & 2* at TFANA; *Like I Say*, *Cellophane* at The Flea; *Mother Courage*, *The Blacks* at Classic Stage; *Wabenzi* at New Ohio; *Hamlet Project* at La MaMa; *Sango*, earning an AUDELCO nomination at National Black Theatre; *Civil War Christmas* at Centerstage; *Electric Baby* at Two Rivers; *Good Goods* at Yale Rep; *Ruined* at La Jolla Playhouse, Huntington Theatre, and Berkeley Rep; *Timon of Athens*, *Coriolanus* at Shakespeare Theatre; and *Rhyme Deferred* at the Kennedy Center. His film and television credits include *Tallulah*, *Freedom*, *Crazy Famous*, *Colin Warner*, “Blacklist,” “The Knick,” and “Louie.” He received training from Lola Louis’ C.A.P.A.S., B.A.D.A. & Howard University.

MICHAEL ELICH (*Marcus, FBI Agent*). In 21 seasons with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Elich, a Juilliard graduate, has played in 49 productions in roles as varied as, Claudius in *Hamlet*, The Pirate King in *The Pirates of Penzance*, Harry Van in *Idiot's Delight*, King John in *King John*, Feste in Darko Tresnjak's *Twelfth Night*, Harold Hill in *The Music Man*, Aufidius in *Coriolanus*, Petruchio in *The Taming Of The Shrew*, Moe Axelrod in *Awake And Sing!*, and in the premier of *Party People*.

GIZEL JIMENEZ (*Clara*) was recently seen as Princess Anna in Disney's *Frozen* at the Hyperion Theater. Her National Tour credits include *West Side Story* as Rosalia. Her Off-Broadway credits include *Unseamly* as Malina. Regionally she has appeared in *Up Here* at La Jolla Playhouse as Cool Girl; *The Theory of Relativity* at the Godspeed as Caroline; *In the Heights* at The Walnut Street Theater and Westchester Broadway Theater as Vanessa.

RAMONA KELLER (*Amira*) made her Broadway debut in *Smokey Joe's Café*; and originated the role of Ms. Paradise in *BKLYN The Musical*; and Radio 1 in *Caroline, or Change* as well as at London's Royal National Theater. Most recently she appeared in Encores! Off-Center's *Little Shop of Horrors* alongside Jake Gyllenhaal and Ellen Greene. Her select regional credits include *Dreamgirls*, Hugh Jackman's revue *In Time* and Handel's *Messiah Rocks!* She has also performed with several symphony orchestras including the New York Pops.

CHRISTOPHER LIVINGSTON (*Malik*) has appeared at The Public in the Public Studio production of *The Urban Retreat*. His additional New York credits include *Normativity* at NYMF, *peerless* at Cherry Lane, *The Architecture of Becoming* at Women's Project. Regionally he has appeared in *The Unfortunates* at American Conservatory Theater; *peerless* at Yale Rep; *Party People*, *The White Snake* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival /Berkeley Rep; *The Whipping Man* at Portland Center Stage; *The Imaginary Invalid*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Hamlet*, *Henry IV pt. 1* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival; and *Romeo & Juliet* at Virginia Stage Company. His film and television credits include *Service To Man* and "Unforgettable."

JESSE J. PEREZ (*Tito*)'s Off-Broadway credits include *The Father* and *A Doll's House* at Theatre for a New Audience; *Informed Consent* at Primary Stages; *Triple Happiness* at Second Stage; *Barrio Grrrl* at the Summer Play Festival; *Recent Tragic Events* at Playwrights Horizons; *In the Penal Colony* at Classic Stage Company; *Up Against the Wind* at New York Theatre Workshop; and *Lucia di Lammermoor* at The Metropolitan Opera. He has also worked regionally and has numerous television and film credits. International he has worked at The Venice Biennale and The Salzburg Festival.

SOPHIA RAMOS (*Maruca*) began as a rock singer for the 90's NYC hard rock outfit Sophia's Toy, signed to Epic/Sony Records. She went on to collaborate and perform with artists Joey Ramone, Rod Stewart, Paul Simon, Big Brother & The Holding Company and the Black Rock Coalition Orchestra. Her theater work includes Robert Schenkkan's musical *The Twelve* at Signature Theater; in Arizona Theater Company's production of *Love, Janis*; and in Berkeley Rep's production of *Party People*.

ROBYNN RODRIGUEZ (*Donna, Fina*) has appeared regionally in *Nickel & Dimed* at the Guthrie; *Richard II* and *Henry V* at the Shakespeare Theater; *The Oresteia*, *Continental Divide*, *Ghost Light*, *Party People*, *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide...* at Berkeley Rep; *Angels in America* at The Intiman Theater; *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Cherry Orchard*, and *Party People* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Internationally she has appeared at Birmingham Rep, The Barbican, and The 43rd Annual Festival des Jeux du Theatre.

HORACE V. ROGERS (*Solias*) has appeared on Broadway in *Kinky Boots*, as well as in *Brooklyn: The Musical* and *Tarzan*. He has toured with Stephanie Mills and Teddy Pendergrass in the gospel play *Your Arms Are Too Short to Box with God*. He went on to become the musical director and featured performer for the premiere presentation of *Ruth Givens' Joy in the Morning* at Carnegie Hall. He has toured in *Rent*, *The Color Purple*, and *What My Husband Doesn't Know*. He has also performed as Musfasa in *The Lion King* in Toronto. His television credits include "Boardwalk Empire," "Orange is the New Black," PBS Great Performance: August Wilson's *The Ground on Which I Stand*," "Gotham," "Soul Food," "43 Days," and his voice can be heard on Disney's "Tarzan."

WILLIAM RUIZ A.K.A. NINJA (*Jimmy "Primo"*) has been a Core Member of UNIVERSES Since 2004. Playwright and acting credits include *Unison* Oregon Shakespeare Festival, 2017; *Party People*; *Spring Training*; *Ameriville*; *Waiting for Gordo*. Acting only credits include *Slanguage*; *Ti-Jean Blues*; *Salome*; *Latin Howl*; *Run Baby Run*. He awards include U.S. Cultural Ambassador with the U.S. State Department and /Jazz at Lincoln Center for the Rhythm Road Tour in 2008); Co-Founder of Ovejas Negras (Puerto Rico). BARD College, BA '03. Publications include UNIVERSES' *The Revolution will be Live!* (Winter 2016 release-TCG Books); *Gun Club* in "Monologues for Actors of Color" (2015- Routledge Press). Affiliations: OSF's Resident Ensemble-UNIVERSES (2013-Present); OSF Acting Company Member; National Performance Network; Network of Ensemble Theaters.

MILDRED RUIZ-SAPP (*Helita*) is a Co-Founder and member of UNIVERSES since 1995. Her playwright and actor credits include *Unison* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 2017; *Party People*; *Spring Training*; *Ameriville*; *The Denver Project*; *One Shot in Lotus Position*; *Blue Suite*; *Rhythmcity*; *Slanguage*; and *The Ride*. As only an actor she has appeared in *The Comedy of Errors* at OSF. Directing credits include *The Seven*; *UBU:Enchained*; and as an assistant director *The Architecture of Loss*. She has received the Charles Flint Kellogg Award in Arts and Letters from Bard College 2016; Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, 2015); U.S. Cultural Ambassador with the U.S. State Department and /Jazz at Lincoln Center for the Rhythm Road Tour in 2008); TCG Peter Zeisler Award in 2008; TCG National Theater Artist Residency Program Award (2002-2004/1999-2001); Van Lier Fellowship with New Dramatists; BRIO Awards (Bronx Recognizes its own-Performance). BARD College, BA '89. Publications include UNIVERSES' *The Revolution will be Live!* (Winter 2016 release-TCG Books). Affiliations: OSF's Resident Ensemble-UNIVERSES (2013-Present); OSF Acting Company Member; Co-Founder of The Point CDC (Bronx, NY); National Performance Network; Network of Ensemble Theaters

STEVEN SAPP (*Omar*) is a Co-Founder and member of UNIVERSES since 1995. His playwright and actor credits include: *Unison* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 2017; *Party People*; *Spring Training*; *Ameriville*; *The Denver Project*; *One Shot in Lotus Position*; *Blue Suite*; *Rhythmcity*; *Slanguage*; and *The Ride*. As only an actor he has appeared in *The Comedy of Errors* at OSF. Directing credits include *The Seven*; *UBU: Enchained*; and as an assistant director *The Architecture of Loss*. Awards include Charles Flint Kellogg Award in Arts and Letters from Bard College 2016; Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, 2015; U.S. Cultural Ambassador with the U.S. State Department and /Jazz at Lincoln Center for the Rhythm Road Tour in 2008); U.S. Cultural Ambassador w/ the U.S. State Dept./Jazz@Lincoln Center (Rhythm Road Tour 2008); TCG Peter Zeisler Award, 2008; TCG National Theater Artist Residency Program Award (2002-2004/1999-2001); Van Lier Fellowship w/ New Dramatists; BRIO Awards (Bronx Recognizes its own-Performance). BARD College, BA '89. Publications include UNIVERSES' *The Revolution will be Live!* (Winter 2016 release-TCG Books). Affiliations: OSF's Resident Ensemble-UNIVERSES (2013-Present); OSF Acting Company Member; Co-Founder of The Point CDC (Bronx, NY); National Performance Network; Network of Ensemble Theaters.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER:

The Public Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director Oskar Eustis and Executive Director Patrick Willingham, is the only theater in New York that produces Shakespeare, the classics, musicals, contemporary and experimental pieces in equal measure. Celebrating his 10th anniversary season at The Public, Eustis has created new community-based initiatives designed to engage audiences like Public Lab, Public Studio, Public Forum, Public Works, and a remount of the Mobile Unit. The Public continues the work of its visionary founder, Joe Papp, by acting as an advocate for the theater as an essential cultural force, and leading and framing dialogue on some of the most important issues of our day. Creating theater for one of the largest and most diverse audience bases in New York City for nearly 60 years, today the Company engages audiences in a variety of venues—including its landmark downtown home at Astor Place, which houses five theaters and Joe's Pub; the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, home to free Shakespeare in the Park; and the Mobile Unit, which tours Shakespearean productions for underserved audiences throughout New York City's five boroughs. The Public's wide range of programming includes free Shakespeare in the Park, the bedrock of the Company's dedication to making theater accessible to all; Public Works, an expanding initiative that is designed to cultivate new connections and new models of engagement with artists, audiences and the community each year; and audience and artist development

initiatives that range from Emerging Writers Group and to the Public Forum series. The Public is located on property owned by the City of New York and receives annual support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; and in October 2012 the landmark building downtown at Astor Place was revitalized to physically manifest the Company's core mission of sparking new dialogues and increasing accessibility for artists and audiences, by dramatically opening up the building to the street and community, and transforming the lobby into a public piazza for artists, students, and audiences. The Public is currently represented on Broadway by the Tony Award-winning acclaimed American musical *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda. The Public has received 59 Tony Awards, 168 Obie Awards, 53 Drama Desk Awards, 54 Lortel Awards, 32 Outer Critics Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics Awards, and five Pulitzer Prizes. www.publictheater.org.

TICKET INFORMATION

PARTY PEOPLE begins previews in The Public's Anspacher Theater on Tuesday, November 1 and is scheduled to run through Sunday, December 4, with an official press opening on Tuesday, November 15.

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The performance schedule is Tuesdays through Sundays at 8:00 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays at 3:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. The performance on Thursday, November 3 is at 7:30 p.m. There is an added 8:00 p.m. performance on Monday, November 7; at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 23. There is no 3:00 p.m. performance on Saturday, November 5; no performance on Tuesday, November 8; Tuesday, November 15; Thursday, November 24; and no 8:00 p.m. performance on Sunday, December 4. Post-show talkbacks with the creative team are scheduled to take place immediately following every performance, starting on Wednesday, November 16. There will be an additional talkback after the Thursday, November 10 performance. Post-show Speaker Series will be held on Sunday, November 20 after the matinee and Sunday, December 4.

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