

## THE PUBLIC THEATER ANNOUNCES COMPLETE CASTING FOR TRANSFORMATIVE NEW MUSICAL **SOUTHERN COMFORT**

Annette O'Toole and Jeff McCarthy  
Reprise Their Roles as Robert Eads & Lola Cola

Along With Lizzie Hagstedt, Jeffrey Kuhn,  
Elizabeth Ward Land, David M. Lutken, Morgan Morse,  
Robin Skye & Joel Waggoner

Donnie Cianciotto & Aneesh Sheth  
Join The Company After a Nationwide Search

December 17, 2015 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced complete casting today for the new musical **SOUTHERN COMFORT** that tells the true story of a group of transgender friends living life on their own terms in the back hills of rural Georgia. Directed by Thomas Caruso and based on the film by Kate Davis, **SOUTHERN COMFORT** features book and lyrics by Dan Collins and music by Julianne Wick Davis, and was conceived for the stage by Robert DuSold and Thomas Caruso. **SOUTHERN COMFORT** begins previews on Tuesday, February 23 and will run through Sunday, March 27 in The Public's Anspacher Theater, with an official press opening on Monday, March 7. Public Theater Member tickets and single tickets are available now.

**Annette O'Toole** and **Jeff McCarthy** will reprise their roles as Robert Eads and Lola Cola, respectively, along with **Lizzie Hagstedt** (*Storyteller Musician, Bass*); **Jeffrey Kuhn** (*Jackson*); **Elizabeth Ward Land** (*Storyteller Musician, Djembe*); **David M. Lutken** (*Storyteller Musician, Guitar*); **Morgan Morse** (*Musician*); **Robin Skye** (*Melanie*); and **Joel Waggoner** (*Storyteller Musician, Violin*). **Donnie Cianciotto** and **Aneesh Sheth** complete the cast of **SOUTHERN COMFORT** after an open call to the transgender community and a nationwide search for submissions.

Based on Kate Davis' 2001 Sundance Award-winning documentary, **SOUTHERN COMFORT** is a courageous, heart-soaring musical that tells the true story of a group of transgender friends living life on their own terms in the back hills of rural Georgia. Winner of the prestigious Jonathan Larson Award, this folk and bluegrass-inspired musical is a celebration of redefining family and choosing love over every obstacle.

*"Southern Comfort is different, beautiful and lovable, just like its heroes."*  
– Raven Snook, Time Out New York

*"This affecting folk-bluegrass musical by Julianne Wick Davis and Dan Collins makes a heartfelt bid to shift perceptions."* – David Rooney, The New York Times

Public Theater Member tickets are available now. Single tickets, starting at \$50, can be accessed by calling **(212) 967-7555**, [www.publictheater.org](http://www.publictheater.org), or in person at the Taub Box Office at The Public Theater at Astor Place 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; in partnership with TodayTix, New York's premiere theater ticket app, free tickets to the first preview on Tuesday, February 23 will be available beginning February 16, via TodayTix mobile lottery.

**SOUTHERN COMFORT** will feature scenic design by James J. Fenton; costume design by Patricia E. Doherty; lighting design by Ed McCarthy; sound design by Andrew Keister; hair design by David Brian Brown; and choreography by Ryan Kasprzak.

**JULIANNE WICK DAVIS** (*Music*). Her credits include *Southern Comfort* with book and lyrics by Dan Collins, based on the Sundance award-winning documentary by Kate Davis. She received the 2012 Jonathan Larson Award for *Southern Comfort* which had a production at Barrington Stage Company in 2013, preceded by the NAMT 2012 Festival of New Musicals, and a developmental reading at Playwrights Horizons in 2010. *Southern Comfort's* developmental production at CAP 21 in 2011 received a GLAAD Media Award. Wick Davis also wrote the music and lyrics for *When We Met* with a book by Dan Collins, presented at the 2012 O'Neill Musical Theatre Conference, York NEO Development Series reading in 2013, and which had a developmental production at CAP 21 in 2014. She also wrote the music for the new musical *Trevor*, with book and lyrics by Dan Collins for URock Productions, based on the Oscar-winning film short. She is a York Theatre's NEO 9 emerging writer, a 2011 Dramatist Guild Fellow, and a 2015 Sundance Fellow at UCross. Wick Davis has an M.F.A. from NYU's Tisch Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program.

**DAN COLLINS** (*Book and Lyrics*). With composer Julianne Wick Davis, Collins wrote the book and lyrics for *Southern Comfort*; *Wood*; and *Trevor* (based on the Academy Award-winning short film and currently in development with URock Theatricals). In collaboration with Sally Wilfert and Michael Winther, Collins wrote book to Wick Davis' music and lyrics for *When We Met* (The Eugene O'Neill National Musical Theater Conference; CAP 21 Theatre Company). He was selected along with Wick Davis as a Dramatist Guild Fellow as well as for TheatreWorks Palo Alto's Writer's Retreat, and he is a recipient of the Jonathan Larson Grant and a GLAAD Media Award in connection with his work on *Southern Comfort*. Collins received his M.F.A in Musical Theater Writing at Tisch School of the Arts at NYU and his B.F.A. in Playwriting at The Theater School of DePaul University.

**THOMAS CARUSO** (*Director and Co-Conceiver*) has directed *Southern Comfort* by Dan Collins and Julianne Wick Davis at Barrington Stage and CAP21, winner of a GLAAD Award and Jonathan Larson Award; and *Academia Nuts* at NYMF, which received the Best New Musical and Excellence in Direction Awards. He has also directed numerous new plays and musicals at Bay Street, Rattlestick, The Play Company, EST, SPF, New York Stage & Film, Penguin Rep, Studio Arena Theatre, 59E59, Gloucester Stage, Adirondack Theatre Festival and TheatreWorks. As an Associate Director, his Broadway credits include *Matilda*, *Ghost*, *Follies*, *Bombay Dreams* and *Mamma Mia!* He also staged the national tours of *Matilda* and *Ghost*, and recently directed the West End show, *Dynamo: Seeing Is Believing*. For his direction of the film *Zombie*, based on the novella by Joyce Carol Oates, he was awarded a California Film Award for Best Direction.

**ROBERT DuSOLD** (*Co-Conceiver*) conceived the transfer of Kate Davis' Sundance Award-winning documentary *Southern Comfort* to the stage. As an actor, DuSold's Broadway and national tour credits include principal roles in *Mamma Mia*, *The Producers*, *Chicago*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*, *Showboat*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Cats*, *Les Miserables*, and *Evita*. He has appeared Off-Broadway in *The Anniversary* at 59 E 59, *Mimi le Duck* at New World Stages, and *The Audience* for the Transport Group. Regionally he has appeared in *The Music Man* at the Guthrie, *The Sound of Music* and *Guys and Dolls* at Papermill Playhouse, *Sunday in the Park* at the Arena Stage, *Sweeney Todd* at Connecticut Rep, Williamstown Theater Festival, The O'Neill Festival and others. He is featured in the hit animated musical *Anastasia*, as well as the recordings of *Sondheim: An Evening in Celebration*

at Carnegie Hall and A Gala Concert for Harold Prince. DuSold is also featured in the book, *Making it on Broadway: Actors Tales of Climbing to the Top*.

**DONNIE CIANCIO** (*Sam*) studied at The American Musical and Dramatic Academy, and spent the last five years in Phoenix and Tucson working as the Artistic Director of Musical Mayhem Cabaret, Arizona's "Under Rehearsed and Over Dramatic Musical Comedy Troupe." He was recently the subject of an award-winning documentary short titled "Donnie" which highlighted his experiences as a transgender man.

**LIZZIE HAGSTEDT** (*Storyteller, Bass*) has appeared in previous productions of *Southern Comfort* at CAP21 and Barrington Stage. Other credits include the national tour of *Sweeney Todd*, and regional productions of *Taming of the Shrew*, *A Marvelous Party*, and *Quilters*. She is a composer in the BMI Musical Theatre Workshop and the Circle Songbook, and currently working on several new musicals.

**JEFFREY KUHN** (*Jackson*) has appeared on Broadway in *The 39 Steps* (Clown 1), *Assassins* (Zangara), *Spamalot* (Bedevere), *Wicked* (Boq), *The Lion King* (Zazu), and the original *Ragtime*. His Off-Broadway credits include John Guare's *3 Kinds of Exile* (Atlantic) and the tour of *The Who's Tommy* (Cousin Kevin). Regional highlights include *An Enemy of the People* (Centerstage); *Next Fall* (St. Louis Rep); *Romeo & Juliet* (Shakespeare Theatre); *I Am My Own Wife* (Stageworks), *Sea of Tranquility* (Old Globe), *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Antony & Cleopatra*, and many others (Canada's Stratford Festival).

**ELIZABETH WARD LAND** (*Storyteller Musician, Djembe*) has appeared on Broadway in *Amazing Grace*, *Scandalous*, *Memphis*, all three versions of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Passion*, and *City of Angels*. Her additional credits include the national tours of *Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Les Miserables*, *Prisoner of Second Avenue*, *Singin' In The Rain* and Off-Broadway in *The Green Heart*, *Hello Again*, *Chess*. Regionally, she has appeared at the Old Globe, Goodspeed, TheatreWorks, Alliance, Sacramento Music Circus, Pasadena Playhouse, Asolo Rep., and Barrington Stage. Her film and television credits include *Young Adult*, *Boy Meets Girl*, "The Blacklist"; "Madam Secretary"; "Law & Order: SVU"; "Boardwalk Empire"; "10-8"; "The Amanda Show."

**DAVID M. LUTKEN** (*Storyteller Musician, Guitar*) has appeared on Broadway in *Inherit The Wind*, *Ring Of Fire*, *The Civil War*, and *The Will Rogers Follies*. He has performed at Carnegie Hall, The 92nd Street Y, Lincoln Center, Off-Broadway and across the U.S., Great Britain, Europe, the Middle East and China as an actor/musician and musical director. His credits include *Dark Of The Moon*, *Stand By Your Man*, *Buddy*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Southern Comfort*, and his original show, *Woody Sez: The Life and Music of Woody Guthrie*, for which he won the Helen Hayes and the Joseph Jefferson awards for Best Actor.

**JEFF McCARTHY** (*Lola Cola*) has appeared in NYC in *Chicago*, *Urinetown*, *Side Show*, *Dream True*, *Sympathetic Magic*, *Grinch*, *Smile*, *Pirate Queen*, and *Beauty and the Beast*. His regional credits include *My Fair Lady*, *The Misanthrope* (Guthrie); *Kunstler* (Hudson Stage); *Oliver*, *You Nero* (Arena Stage); *All My Sons*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Follies* (Barrington Stage, associate artist); *The Front Page*, *The Price* (Long Wharf); *The Underpants* (Hartford Stage); *Buried Child*, *Pantagleize* (ACT, San Francisco). He has appeared internationally in *Iphigenia in Aulis* (Athens Theater Center) and *Lady Be Good* (La Fenice). His film and television credits include "Good Wife," "Schweitzer" (title role), "Ed," "Love Monkey," "Star Trek(s)," "Law and Order(s)," "Designing Women," "Cheers," "Heat of the Night," "Doogie Howzer," *Starting Out in the Evening*, *Consent*, *RoboCop 2*, *Eve of Destruction*, *Rapid Fire*, and *Cliffhanger*.

**MORGAN MORSE** (*Musician*) is a musician, actor and writer from Connecticut currently studying music and theatre at Bennington College. Regional credits include *Stand By Your Man* (Euple Byrd) and *South Pacific* (Professor) at the Ivoryton Playhouse, and *The Legend of Jim Cullen* (Thomas Hubbard) at Heartwood Regional Theatre Company. He has also worked as an accompanist and private guitar/piano teacher, as well as performing as a solo artist and with his band, The Nameless Trio.

**ANNETTE O'TOOLE** (*Robert Eads*) has appeared in *Hamlet in Bed* (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater); *Third* (Two River Theatre); *Southern Comfort* (Barrington Stage Company and Cap21); *Heresy* (The Flea Theater); *Kindness* (Playwrights Horizons); *The Seagull* (CSC); *The Quality of Life* (Arena

Stage); *Magnolia* (The Goodman Theatre); *Yankee Wives*, and *Sun Bearing Down* (Old Globe Theatre). Her film and television credits include *Women Who Kill*, *48 HRS*, *Smile*, *Superman III*, *Cat People*, *One on One*, "11.22.63," "Halt and Catch Fire," "Grey's Anatomy," "Smallville," "Nash Bridges," "The Kennedys of Massachusetts" (Emmy, Golden Globe nominations). She received an Academy Award nomination for Best Song with Michael McKean for "A Kiss at the End of the Rainbow," from the movie *A Mighty Wind*.

**ANEESH SHETH** (*Carly*) has previously appeared as *Sweetie* in the national tour of *Bombay Dreams*, *Kami Sutra* on NBC's "Outsourced," *Aouda* in *Around the World in 80 Days* (Village Theatre), *Suraiya* in *Samsara* (Thick House), and *Valerie DeRasport* in the indie feature, *Semi-Secret* (Summer 2016). Other credits include LaMama, PlayGround SF, Bay Area Playwrights Foundation and the Asian American Theatre Company (San Francisco). She is the creator/producer of "CRAVE: an Original Series."

**ROBIN SKYE** (*Melanie*) has appeared on Broadway and in the national tours of *Parade*, *Les Miserables* (Three companies), *Sunset Boulevard*, *Cyrano-The Musical*, *The Big Band Years*. Her select Off-Broadway credits include *The Butter and Egg Man*, *Cactus Flower*, *A Doll's Life*, *Mata Hari*. She has appeared regionally at Williamstown, Barrington Stage, Eugene O'Neill, Goodspeed, Hartford Stage. Her film and television credits include *ITHICA* (directed by Meg Ryan), *Beautiful Creatures*, *Freedom Writers*, *Living Out Loud* (directed by Richard Lagravenese), "The Affair," "The Divide," "The Wire," "The Tony Awards," "Third Watch," numerous soap operas. Skye also co-wrote her debut album *House Of Love*.

**JOEL WAGGONER** (*Storyteller Musician, Violin*) is a musical theater composer, performer, and educator who holds an M.F.A. from NYU's Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program. His credits include *Southern Comfort* (Barrington Stage Co., CAP21, NAMT). Waggoner wrote the music for *Presto Change-O* (Book/Lyrics by Eric Price), commissioned by Barrington Stage Company. Currently, he is serving as the Director of Music for the Pace University Musical Theatre BFA Program. He is a 2012 Dramatist Guild Fellow and 2009 ASCAP Max Dreyfus Award Winner.

### **ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER:**

The Public Theater, under the leadership of 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 Shakespeare 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 Shakespeare 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 *Fun Home* and Lin-Manuel Miranda's acclaimed American musical *Hamilton*. The Public has received 47 Tony Awards, 167 Obie Awards, 52 Drama Desk Awards, 48 Lortel Awards, 31 Outer Critics Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics Awards, and four Pulitzer Prizes. [www.publictheater.org](http://www.publictheater.org)

The LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust provides leadership support for The Public Theater's year-round activities; Bank of America, Proud Season Sponsor of Shakespeare in the Park; The Harold & Mimi Steinberg New Play Development Fund at The Public Theater Supports the Creation and Development of New Plays; The Philip and Janice Levin Foundation - Lead Supporter of The Public's Access and Engagement Programming; The Time Warner Foundation, Founding Sponsor of The Emerging Writers Group; Delta Air Lines, Official Airline of The Public Theater; *New York Magazine* is the official print sponsor of The Public Theater's 2015-2016 downtown season; Public support is provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency; and the National Endowment for the Arts, an independent federal agency.

### **TICKET INFORMATION**

***SOUTHERN COMFORT*** will begin previews in The Public's Anspacher Theater on Tuesday, February 23 and will run through Sunday, March 27, with an official press opening on Monday, March 7.

Public Theater Member tickets are available now. Single tickets, starting at \$50, can be accessed by calling **(212) 967-7555**, [www.publictheater.org](http://www.publictheater.org), or in person at the Taub Box Office at The Public Theater at Astor Place at 425 Lafayette Street.

Free tickets to the first preview on Tuesday, February 23 will be available via TodayTix mobile lottery. Winners will be notified by email and push notifications between 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. on the day of the first preview. Winners must confirm their winning tickets in the TodayTix app within one hour of being notified. A limited number of tickets will also be distributed, beginning at 12:00 p.m., via lottery in the lobby of The Public Theater at Astor Place at 425 Lafayette Street.

The performance schedule is Tuesdays through Sundays at 7:00 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays at 1:00 p.m. (*There is an added performance on Monday, February 29 at 7:00 p.m. There is no performance on Saturday, February 27 at 1:00 p.m., Tuesday, March 1 at 7:00 p.m., or Tuesday, March 8 at 7:00 p.m.*)

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. For more information, visit [www.publictheater.org](http://www.publictheater.org).

# # #