

THE PUBLIC THEATER ADDS TRANSFORMATIVE NEW MUSICAL ***SOUTHERN COMFORT*** TO 2015-16 SEASON

Book and Lyrics by Dan Collins

Music by Julianne Wick Davis

Directed by Thomas Caruso

Based on the Film by Kate Davis

Conceived for Stage by Robert DuSold and Thomas Caruso

Actors and Singers Who Identify As Transgender Encouraged to
Contact The Public's Casting Department

November 5, 2015 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced today that the transformative, heart-soaring musical ***SOUTHERN COMFORT*** has been added to the 2015-16 downtown season. 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.

In casting the musical, The Public Theater is especially interested in meeting with actors and singers who identify as transgender. Any transgender artists interested in being considered for ***SOUTHERN COMFORT*** should email southerncomfortcasting@publictheater.org with a picture and resume or bio, along with any video/audio performance samples, if available. Artists can also mail hard copy submissions/performance samples to: Casting/The Public Theater, 425 Lafayette Street, New York, New York 10003; Attention: Southern Comfort. Complete casting will be announced at a later date.

"*Southern Comfort* is a beautiful, gentle, complicated look at a community that has been maligned, misunderstood, and oppressed for centuries," said **Artistic Director Oskar Eustis**. "We are proud to present this groundbreaking and moving piece of theater."

The Public continues its longstanding commitment to groundbreaking theater with this courageous, heart-soaring musical based on Kate Davis' 2001 Sundance Award-winning documentary. ***SOUTHERN COMFORT*** 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.

"As touching as it is idiosyncratic, Southern Comfort effectively redefines the term 'family musical.' Based on a 2001 Sundance award-winning documentary about transgender people in rural Georgia, it features perhaps the strongest family to be seen on a New York stage." – Frank Scheck, New York Post

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

Public Theater Member tickets, priced at \$30, will be available beginning mid-November. Single tickets, starting at \$50, will be available beginning in early December. Tickets can be accessed by calling (212) 967-7555, 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; 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*.

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 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 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

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

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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.

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