

**THE
PUBLIC.**

**ONASSIS
USA**

**THE PUBLIC THEATER AND ONASSIS USA
ANNOUNCE LINE-UP FOR
ONASSIS FESTIVAL 2019: DEMOCRACY IS COMING
APRIL 10-28, 2019**

**Festival Will Celebrate Democracy in Its Ideal Form and Examine Its
Evolution from Ancient Greece to Modern-Day America through a Wide
Range of Performances and Conversations**

**Highlights Include *Socrates* by Tim Blake Nelson;
Choir! Choir! Choir!;
Antigone – Lonely Planet by Lena Kitsopoulou;
The Fever by 600 HIGHWAYMEN; Xylouris White;
A Conversation with Suzan-Lori Parks & Oskar Eustis;
A Day of Discussions of Democracy;
and *Relic* by Euripides Laskaridis**

January 10, 2019 – **The Public Theater** and **Onassis USA** today announced the wide-ranging line-up for the ***ONASSIS FESTIVAL 2019: DEMOCRACY IS COMING*** running April 10-28, 2019 at The Public Theater and also La MaMa.

The 19-day Onassis Festival is a festival of arts and ideas that celebrates, evaluates, and considers anew the concept of democracy – perhaps the most renowned Greek innovation. Through a multidisciplinary program of theater, music, talks, and more, The Public Theater and Onassis USA, two agitators of public curiosity—one Greek, one American—bring together artists and thinkers from both countries to offer artistic interpretations and embodiments of democracy. This Festival is anchored by The Public's new production of Tim Blake Nelson's *Socrates* featuring Michael Stuhlbarg as Socrates and directed by Doug Hughes.

"Democracy and theater were both born in Athens, in the same decade at the end of the 6th century BCE," said **Public Theater Artistic Director Oskar Eustis**. "We are so honored to partner with Onassis USA to celebrate our shared values of democracy and free artistic expression."

"All our actions at the Onassis Foundation aim to promote democratic ideals, and inspire individual voices to realize their full power and potential, especially at times when those may be challenged," said **President of the Onassis Foundation Anthony S. Papadimitriou**. "When we decided to dedicate our annual festival to the theme of Democracy, we found in The Public Theater an ideal partner. In ancient Greece the theater was a sacred space where artists and citizens could exercise freedom of speech without fear, irrespective of their social status, religious practice, or political ideology, and share an emotional and thought-provoking experience—which is what we are offering with *DEMOCRACY IS COMING*."

The Festival continues the thematic exploration of democracy in recent Onassis USA programming, including *Onassis Festival 2018: The Birds, A Festival Inspired by Aristophanes*, the *Speaking Truth to Power* series in collaboration with the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and the 2018 revival of *The Gospel at Colonus*, the Lee Breuer / Bob Telson landmark, at the Delacorte Theater, in collaboration with The Public Theater.

Karen Brooks Hopkins, Onassis USA Senior Advisor, said, “There is a lot of talk about democracy these days, but, as is often the case, it can come across as shallow or devoid of meaning. So what are we talking about when we talk about democracy? To be reminded, we have to look back, to the Greeks, and forward, to the artists, who more accurately and honestly than any politician can remind us of what democracy is meant to look like, in its purest form.”

“This festival is named after a Leonard Cohen song – ‘Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.’,” said **Onassis Festival Curator Mark Russell**. “Just as Cohen’s song is a provocation, so too is this festival. What is the condition of democracy today when we see it undermined at every turn? The ancient Greeks created this form of government, our founding fathers revived and reinvented it for their time. How do we reinvent it for ours? Using song, story, and discussion, *Democracy Is Coming* is an invitation to all New Yorkers to take measure of where we’ve been, where we are, and where we are going.”

ONASSIS FESTIVAL AT THE PUBLIC:

Socrates

April 2 - May 19

Official Press Opening: April 16

(Running Time: Two hours and 45 minutes with an intermission)

World Premiere

Written by Tim Blake Nelson

Directed by Doug Hughes

Martinson Hall at The Public

SOCRATES is a witty and endlessly fascinating new drama about a complicated man who changed how the world thought. This powerful new play by actor, director, and writer Tim Blake Nelson (*O Brother, Where Art Thou?*; *Holes*) is an intellectual thrill ride from the philosopher’s growing prominence in democratic Athens through the military and social upheavals that led to one of the most infamous executions in Western history. Tony Award winner Doug Hughes (*Doubt*, *Junk*) directs this timely and timeless new work that serves as a passionate tribute to the man who continues to inspire us to question authority and defend freedom of belief.

Initial casting includes Dave Quay (*Diokles, Meletus*), Austin Smith (*Alcibiades*), Michael Stuhlbarg (*Socrates*), and Joe Tapper (*Agathon, Meno*). *Complete casting to be announced at a later date.*

This Alien Nation

April 10 at 7:00 p.m.

(Running Time: 90 minutes)

By Sofija Stefanovic

Joe’s Pub at The Public

Host Sofija Stefanovic welcomes some of her favorite people for a celebration of immigration. Each month, at one of New York’s finest venues, some fish-out-of-water tell true tales from their lives. Audiences will hear anecdotes about language barriers, cultural missteps, rumbles, romance, and more. From addresses to the President, to songs about first kisses, the evening is set to be one of worldly proportions where audiences will enjoy drinks, laughs, and cries in between.

Relic

April 10-13

(Running Time: 45 minutes)

By Euripides Laskaridis/OSMOSIS

Shiva Theater at The Public

Relic is a survival from the past. A thing left behind, be it memory, object, language, or being. Euripides Laskaridis, an artist from Greece, immerses himself and others in ideas of transformation and ridicule that shift restlessly between the peculiarly poignant and the utterly bizarre. This outrageously engaging solo performance, crafted in the heated heart of the current Greek crisis, takes playful risks out far from the norm to test the limits of our acceptance when it comes to things incongruous and unfamiliar. Sly facets of cabaret, vaudeville, and slapstick make magic out of the mundane, maneuvering audiences unawares into moments unexpectedly transcendent.

The Fever

April 11-21

(Running Time: 60 minutes)

By 600 HIGHWAYMEN

La MaMa

Co-Presented with La MaMa and Onassis USA

THE FEVER tests the limits of an individual and collective responsibility, and our willingness to be there for one another. Returning from its debut in *Under the Radar*, performed in complete collaboration with the audience, **THE FEVER** examines how we assemble, organize, and care for the bodies around us.

Choir! Choir! Choir!

April 13 at 5:00 p.m.

(Running Time: 90 minutes)

By Choir! Choir! Choir!

FREE in The Public's Lobby

Audience becomes choir in this live, powerful pop music mass sing-along! Singers and non-singers alike are invited to The Public Theater's historic lobby to take part in an interactive musical collaboration. Pushing the boundaries between practice and performance, artist and audience, **CHOIR! CHOIR! CHOIR!** brings soul-lifting atonement to the plague of contemporary disconnection: a community brought together through the common language of music. Directors Nobu Adilman and Daveed Goldman have amassed a dedicated and passionate community of singers in their native Toronto, as well as around the world, and have performed with the likes of Patti Smith, Tegan and Sara, Rufus Wainwright, The Flaming Lips, Rickie Lee Jones, and Debbie Harry.

Banda Magda

April 14 at 9:30 p.m.

(Running Time: 90 minutes)

By Magda Giannikou and Banda Magda

Joe's Pub at The Public

Led by Greek-born composer, orchestrator, singer, and accordionist Magda Giannikou (Kronos Quartet, Louis CK), Banda Magda moves from samba to French chanson, from Greek folk tunes to Colombian cumbia and Afro-Peruvian lando. Drawing on the band's global background (Greece, Argentina, Japan, Colombia, USA), the group combines South American rhythms with jazz improvisation, cinematic arranging, sophisticated audience participation, mid-century classics, and world "chansons" sung in 6 languages. Founded in 2010 in New York, Banda Magda has toured in more than 22 countries and 5 continents. This group of close musical friends turn Giannikou's songs into engaging romps that have won them a spot with Carnegie Hall Musical Explorers Series, and Snarky Puppy's Family Dinner Vol.1, as well as performances at discerning venues and festivals such as WOMAD, Atlanta Jazz Festival, Vancouver Jazz Festival, L'Olympia, Jazz à Vienne, Canarias Jazz, Apollo Hammersmith, The Kennedy Center, Kathmandu Jazz Festival, and many more.

Rebetika: The Blues of Greece

April 12 at 7:00 p.m.

(Running Time: 90 minutes)

By Lena Kitsopoulou

Joe's Pub at The Public

A musical movement that flourished in Greece in the 1920s and '30s, the *rebetika* were the songs of the refugees from Asia Minor, who had newly settled in the shantytowns of Athens and Piraeus. With rhythms and styles of Greek, Arab, Turkish, and Jewish influences, the *rebetika* told of the hardships of forced migration, life in the margins of society, underworld characters, the “hashish-smokers,” and outlaws. Despite their origin and subject-matters, the songs quickly gained popularity and were eventually performed in the expensive nightclubs of that time, turning some of their songwriters into stars. Similar to fado, flamenco, and the American blues, the *rebetika* carried words and melodies of human struggle, and especially after the Second World War, to the Greeks, they became a symbol of resistance, resilience, and perseverance. For one night only, the preeminent wild-child of the Greek stage, Lena Kitsopoulou, and her band of traditional *rebetika* musicians from Greece, will revive the backstreets of Athens and Piraeus in Joe’s Pub!

Antigone – Lonely Planet

April 18-20

(Running Time: 120 minutes)

Written and Directed by Lena Kitsopoulou

Shiva Theater at The Public

From the imagination of Lena Kitsopoulou, the Greek stage’s preeminent wild child, comes a peculiar metamorphosis of an ancient Greek tragedy: Sophocles’ *Antigone*, staged as a comedy. Can it be done? A quartet of skiers are invited to deliver a panel discussion on *Antigone*. This absurd premise quickly takes a dark spin which stays true to the motifs of the original play, all the while offering a satirical and desperate “here and now” take on it.

Xylouris White

April 18 at 7:00 p.m. & April 19 at 9:30 p.m.

(Running Time: 90 minutes)

Joe’s Pub at The Public

Xylouris White is firmly rooted in the past and future. Playing Cretan music of original and traditional composition, the band consists of Georgios Xylouris on Cretan laouto and vocals and Jim White on drum kit. Xylouris is known and loved by Cretans and Greeks at home and abroad and has been playing professionally from age 12. Jim White is an Australian drummer known and loved throughout the world as the drummer of Dirty Three, Venom P Stinger, and now, Xylouris White. For the last four years these two men have been performing as Xylouris White, the culmination of 25 years of friendship forged through music and place.

ADDITIONAL FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING:

Brunch, Tragedy, & Us

April 13 at 12:00 p.m.

Featuring Simon Critchley and Paul Holdengräber

The Library at The Public

What better way to contemplate life and tragedy than with two of the world’s finest conversationalists and a Bloody Mary? To celebrate the launch of his latest book, *Tragedy, the Greeks, and Us*, writer and philosopher Simon Critchley joins master interviewer Paul Holdengräber for a stimulating discussion on the lessons drawn from ancient Greek tragedy, and how those can help us better understand the faults that are both in our stars and in ourselves. Critchley sees it as the responsibility of every generation to reinvent the classics. For us not to become stupefied by the onrush of a fast-changing future that we cannot control or even imagine, we must scrutinize and interpret the past and its powerful influence on our present. To discuss how Greek tragedy can help us do exactly that, Critchley finds a perfect partner in Holdengräber, Founding Executive Director of Onassis Los Angeles (OLA), and former director of The New York Public Library’s LIVE from the NYPL, where he interviewed and hosted over 600 events with major cultural figures.

DAY OF DEMOCRACY

April 14

Shiva Theater at The Public

Democracy Is The City

2:00 p.m.

Jane Jacobs wrote that “cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody”—echoing Aristotle, who (millennia earlier) wrote that “any city which is truly so called, and is not merely one in name, must devote itself to the end of encouraging goodness.” How does the city—our city—encourage goodness, and how are we the people helping (or hindering) the creation of a city that we want to live in? *Democracy Is The City* examines the municipal level of democracy, from the creation of commons to their appropriation, and how our democratic rights are being sold to the highest bidder in our own backyard.

Democracy Is Digital

4:00 p.m.

More than four billion people now use the internet, a population more than twice as large as that of the largest countries on the planet. In the last decade, technology has helped promote the spread of democratic action in movements like the Arab Spring and the Women’s March, while simultaneously being integral to the rise of authoritarianism and tyranny across the globe. The future of humanity is being determined by algorithms, but who has a voice in how they are used and abused? *Democracy Is Digital* explores the idea of a borderless society, bound only by the reach of ones and zeroes, and how that society might be designed – either for good or for ill.

Democracy Is Coming

6:00 p.m.

Historically, democracy has made violent entrances into society—from ancient Greece to the American revolution to the Arab Spring. But has any people ever truly formed an ideal democracy? Or have we faltered — are we faltering now—on the steps of tyranny? Plato wrote that “the excessive increase of anything often causes a reaction in the opposite direction.” If that’s true, this current rise of authoritarian regimes might be a sign that democracy has a less obvious foothold in our society than we’d like to believe. *Democracy Is Coming* asks the question: if true democracy arrived tomorrow, would we even want to let it in?

PUBLIC FORUM: Of, By, and For the People

April 15 at 7:00 p.m.

Featuring Oskar Eustis and Suzan-Lori Parks

Anspacher Theater at The Public

Theater and democracy share a birthplace, share fundamental tenants, and provide opportunities for the people to activate and understand their own power. But in a world where both the arts and democracy are increasingly under threat, what does it mean to be a “fundamentally democratic” theater? And how can the theater continue to encourage our best hopes for democracy? Join The Public’s Artistic Director Oskar Eustis, Pulitzer Prize-winner Suzan-Lori Parks, and more for an evening exploring the indivisible relationship between democracy and the theater.

PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE PRESENTS: What’s Hecuba to Him? Greek Tragic Women on Shakespeare’s Stage

April 22 at 7:00 p.m.

Martinson Hall at The Public

Ancient Greek plays – and in particular, their titanic, tragic women – exerted a powerful and uncharted influence on Shakespeare’s dramatic landscape. When Hamlet reflects on the moving power of tragic performance, he turns to the most prominent of them: “What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba/That he should weep for her?” Through readings from Euripides and Shakespeare, Professor Tanya Pollard and a cast of actors will illustrate how Greek plays and their towering female figures challenged Shakespeare to reimagine the affective possibilities of tragedy, comedy, and the emerging genre of tragicomedy.

SHOW DISCUSSIONS:

A lively discussion with scholars and artists around these performances:

Socrates: Wednesday, April 10 at 6:30 p.m. before the performance

Relic: Thursday, April 11 immediately following the 8:00 p.m. performance in the Shiva Theater

Antigone – Lonely Planet: Thursday, April 18 and Friday, April 19 immediately following the 8:00 p.m. performances in the Shiva Theater

ABOUT ONASSIS USA:

Founded in 2000, the Onassis Foundation USA was the first international affiliate of the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation. For over 19 years, it has been dedicated to culture, community, and education, with projects that can effectively inspire social change and justice across borders. By collaborating with Onassis Stegi in Athens and educational and cultural institutions throughout the Americas, Onassis USA presents theatrical and dance productions, art exhibits, conversations, lectures, and other initiatives, triggering discussions about democratic values, human rights, civil rights, and the ever-changing realities facing today's citizens on a global scale. Onassis Foundation USA runs through two major initiatives, one cultural for the general public through its Onassis Cultural Center New York, and the other educational for scholars and students in partnership with educational institutions through the Onassis Humanities Impact Program.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER:

THE PUBLIC is theater of, by, and for all people. Artist-driven, radically inclusive, and fundamentally democratic, 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 Forum, Under the Radar, Public Studio, 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 musical *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 59 Tony Awards, 170 Obie Awards, 53 Drama Desk Awards, 54 Lortel Awards, 32 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. publictheater.org

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