

NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pittsburgh Public Theater Launches National Open Call for Black Performers to Audition for *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM IN HARLEM*

August 29, 2022—Pittsburgh Public Theater is conducting a nation-wide search to cast their upcoming production of *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM IN HARLEM*, adapted and directed by The Public's Resident Director Justin Emeka. His production will re-contextualize Shakespeare's classic comedy within the context of a fantastical Black cultural reality. "This play is essentially a fairy tale set in ancient Athens, yet Shakespeare made no attempt to be historically accurate. Culturally speaking, his characters are unapologetically Elizabethan as opposed to Greek," Emeka explains. "In similar fashion, my production re-imagines Athens as an African or Black cultural melting pot—essentially a modern version of the Harlem Renaissance." Emeka will incorporate traditional African dance, music, and spirituality into the fairies, while the nobles, mechanicals, and young lovers reflect more contemporary sensibilities shaped by jazz and hip-hop.

Emeka first directed *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM IN HARLEM* in 2013 at the Classical Theater in Harlem when The New York Times called it, "as fresh as country lemonade, with its smart casting." This will be the first time it is produced at a major regional theater.

Pittsburgh Public Theater Artistic Director Marya Sea Kaminski states, "Justin's work is transformational, not only on stage but in the rehearsal room, for the audience, and in the bigger conversations we are having in the American Theatre. The challenges of the last few years that forced us to collaborate digitally have given us the opportunity to connect and work with actors all over the country. We want to have that same experience in this rehearsal room. We know there are great artists working in every major city in America, and that our talent pool is not limited to the performers auditioning in Pittsburgh or New York. We want to reach beyond our usual casting methods and open this project to artists from Atlanta, Chicago, Texas, and beyond."

Pittsburgh Public Theater is encouraging audition videos from Black and Brown performers with the ability to embrace Shakespeare's language as well as a passion to celebrate Black culture. Emeka welcomes (but does not require) actors to speak with accents or dialects that come from their own personal heritage i.e., Haitian, Jamaican, Puerto Rican, Brooklyn, Nigerian, etc.

Interested performers should prepare:

- Two monologues—one from the Shakespeare canon and one from the sides available [here](https://pct.formstack.com/forms/pptmidsommernautaudition)
- 16 bars a cappella of any song in any genre
- All materials should not exceed five minutes total
- Videos are due **September 20, 2022** and can be submitted online at: <https://pct.formstack.com/forms/pptmidsommernautaudition>

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Performers must be available to be in Pittsburgh for the entire rehearsal and performance process, January 3 – February 19, 2023 (possible extension TBD).

Justin Emeka's artistic work and scholarship challenges notions of multi-racial casting by centering on not only Black actors, but Black culture, as a foundational practice in re-imaging classic work. He outlined his approach in an acclaimed essay "Seeing Shakespeare Through Brown Eyes" ("Black Acting Methods," Routledge; 1st edition) and "Playing with Race in the New Millennium" ("Casting a Movement: The Welcome Table Initiative, Routledge; 1st edition). He has previously reimaged productions of *MACBETH*, *ROMEO AND JULIET*, Tennessee William's *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*, Moliere's *THE WOULD-BE GENTLEMAN*, and Sophocles' *ANTIGONE*. He was a Drama League Classical Directing Fellow at the Old Globe and earned tenure at Oberlin College in the Theater and Africana Studies departments. He currently serves on the Board of Trustees of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation, helping to support the next generation of directors.

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Pittsburgh Public Theater is dedicated to serving as a true public theater to the Pittsburgh region, producing more than 120 performances each season and welcoming more than 70,000 guests through the O'Reilly Theater's doors every year. The theater is renowned for its exceptional mix of programming, featuring international classics, fresh new works, and favorite musicals. Its commitment to education and engagement initiatives is a hallmark, and includes the signature Shakespeare Monologue & Scene Contest and innovative community partnerships. The organization, under the leadership of Artistic Director Marya Sea Kaminski and Managing Director Lou Castelli, celebrates its 48th season in 2022.