

THE **PUBLIC.**

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

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THE **PUBLIC.** + THE **BUSHWICK
STARR**



Ryan J. Haddad



Dickie Hearts



Alejandra Ospina

PHOTOS: CAST & CREATIVE HEADSHOTS

**THE PUBLIC THEATER
AND THE BUSHWICK STARR
ANNOUNCE
CASTING FOR THE
WORLD PREMIERE OF
*DARK DISABLED STORIES***

By Ryan J. Haddad
Directed by Jordan Fein
Produced by The Bushwick Starr
Presented by The Public Theater

Complete Cast Includes Ryan J. Haddad, Dickie Hearts,
and Alejandra Ospina

Performances Begin with a Joseph Papp Free Performance
On Tuesday, February 28 and Run Through Sunday, March 26;
Official Press Opening on Thursday, March 9

Members of the Deaf and Disabled Community Can Access Discounted Tickets
With Promo Code AccessDDS

January 11, 2023 – The Public Theater Theater (Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director and Patrick Willingham, Executive Director) and The Bushwick Starr (Noel Allain, Co-Founder and Artistic Director and Sue Kessler, Co-Founder and Creative Director) announced complete casting today for the upcoming World Premiere of **DARK DISABLED STORIES** written by Public Theater Creative Rebuilds New York Resident Artist **Ryan J. Haddad** and directed by **Jordan Fein**. After appearing in The Public's Under the Radar Festival with his solo play *Hi, Are You Single?* and the cabaret *Falling for Make Believe*, Haddad returns

with his latest autobiographical work: **DARK DISABLED STORIES**. Performances will begin in The Public's Shiva Theater with a Joseph Papp Free Performance on Tuesday, February 28 and run through Sunday, March 26. **DARK DISABLED STORIES** will officially open on Thursday, March 9.

Acclaimed writer and performer **Ryan J. Haddad** makes his Off-Broadway playwriting debut with the hilarious and audacious **DARK DISABLED STORIES**. Haddad's newest autobiographical play is a series of unforgiving vignettes about the strangers he encounters while navigating a city (and a world) not built for his walker and cerebral palsy. Directed by **Jordan Fein**, **DARK DISABLED STORIES** probes implicit ableism and the assumptions we make about people we'll never really know.

The cast of **DARK DISABLED STORIES** will include **Ryan J. Haddad**, **Dickie Hearts**, and **Alejandra Ospina**.

"When Noel Allain asked what project I might like to bring to The Bushwick Starr, I had this collection of stories in mind, but never in my wildest dreams could I have envisioned the production we are embarking to make. *Dark Disabled Stories* is about disparate moments in my life, but when each of them happened, I was just hoping to have a regular day, until someone, somehow, either directly or indirectly reminded me that I was disabled, as if I wasn't already aware," shares playwright and performer **Ryan J. Haddad**. "They're ordinary, sometimes funny stories that turn dark because of the ways the world is taught to interact with disability, or the measures people take to avoid and ignore disability entirely. I'm excited for audiences to balk, laugh, and cringe with me about the ways strangers can be very strange."

The production will feature scenic and costume design by dots, lighting design by Oona Curley, sound design by Kathy Ruvuna, and video design by Kameron Neal. Andrew Morrill will serve as the Director of Artistic Sign Language and Alison Kopit will serve as the Accessibility Consultant. Melanie Lisby will serve as the Production Stage Manager and Miriam Rochford will serve as the Interpreter Coordinator and stage manager. Peter Royston will also serve as stage manager.

"Developing *Dark Disabled Stories* with Ryan for the past three years has been an absolute joy and privilege and now, building this production with this extraordinary team of collaborators is truly thrilling," shared director **Jordan Fein**. "Ryan's stories are bold, vital, and exactly what we need right now."

In an effort to make this production as accessible as possible to disabled and d/Deaf individuals, **DARK DISABLED STORIES** will feature American Sign Language, open captions, and audio descriptions integrated into every performance. The Public has also expanded wheelchair and mobility access for this production. Additionally, The Public strives to create an inclusive and welcoming space where audience members can be free to be themselves for this production, and expectations about audience etiquette are relaxed at this performance.

While The Public Theater and Bushwick Starr have a history of collaborating on shows for The Public's annual Under the Radar Festival, this production of **DARK DISABLED STORIES** marks the exciting first co-production between the two organizations to take place on The Public's mainstage. The Public is proud to be presenting this important story alongside The Bushwick Starr and supports its commitment to nurturing artists and producing bold new works.

In keeping with guidance from city, state, and federal officials, proof of vaccination against COVID-19 and the use of face masks are no longer mandated for entry into The Public's theaters, restaurant, or the facility. This change in policy is effective immediately. The use of face masks is encouraged at all performances, but will only be required at Saturday and Sunday matinee performances, and Tuesday evening performances, as well as Joseph Papp Free Performances. These mask required performances are to accommodate those who are immunocompromised or uncomfortable in an unmasked environment. Learn more at [Safe At The Public](#).

The Library at The Public serves food and drink Tuesday through Sunday, beginning at 5:00 p.m. and closing at midnight. The Library is closed on Mondays. For more information, visit publictheater.org.

BIOS:

RYAN J. HADDAD (*Playwright & Performer*) is an alum of The Public Theater's Emerging Writers Group, Devised Theater Working Group, and Under the Radar. His acclaimed solo play *Hi, Are You Single?* was presented as part of Under the Radar: INCOMING! in 2017, prior to its world premiere run at Woolly Mammoth in Washington, D.C., produced in association with IAMA Theatre Company in Los Angeles. Haddad returned to Under the Radar in 2020 with his family cabaret *Falling for Make Believe*, part of the Joe's Pub: In Concert series. *Dark Disabled Stories* marks his Bushwick Starr debut and his Off-Broadway debut as a playwright. Additional Off-Broadway: *american (tele)visions* by Victor I. Cazares (NYTW) and *The Watering Hole*, created by Lynn Nottage and Miranda Haymon (Signature Theatre). His television credits include "The Politician" and the upcoming FX limited series "Retreat." Haddad is a recipient of Vineyard Theatre's Paula Vogel Playwriting Award, IAMA's Shonda Rhimes Unsung Voices Playwriting Commission, and Rising Phoenix Repertory's Cornelia Street American Playwriting Award. His essays have been published in the *New York Times*, *Out Magazine*, and *American Theatre*. He is a 2020 Disability Futures Fellow and a former Queer|Art Performance and Playwriting Fellow, under the mentorship of Moe Angelos. @ryanjhaddad

JORDAN FEIN (*Director*) is a theater and opera director based somewhere between New York and London. Select credits include the world premiere of Andrew Butler's *Rags Parkland Sings the Songs of the Future* (Ars Nova; Lucille Lortel for Outstanding New Musical); Erin Markey's *Singlet* (The Bushwick Starr) and *A Ride On The Irish Cream* (American Realness Festival, American Repertory Theater); *The Miserly Knight* and *The Dead City* (Bard Summerscape); *Indecent* (Weston Playhouse); *The Skin Of Our Teeth* (Bard College); and *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (Opera Philadelphia/Curtis Opera Theatre). Fein co-directed the London transfer of *Rodgers & Hammerstein's Oklahoma!* at The Young Vic and was the Associate Director for the 2019 Broadway Revival (Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical). He is the Associate Director on the current West End revival of Kander and Ebb's *Cabaret* (Olivier Award for Best Revival of a Musical). jordanfein.net.

DICKIE HEARTS (*Performer*). Dickie Hearts is a Deaf, Gay, multiracial actor. His TV credits include a recurring role on Netflix's "Tales of the City" (2019), a supporting role on HBO's "High Maintenance" (2020), and a guest-starring role on Netflix's "Grace & Frankie" (2017). Stage credits include New York Deaf Theatre's *Maple & Vine* and IRT's *Stepchild*, *Please Untranslate Me*, and *Trash*. Dickie Hearts continues to push for more Deaf, LGBTQ+, and BIPOC visibility and representation onstage and onscreen. Hearts is repped by Rossi Talent Management (RTM) and Nicolosi & Co.

ALEJANDRA OSPINA (*Performer*) is a first-generation native New Yorker with roots in Colombia. She has been active for many years in advocacy and performance projects locally and beyond. In her youth, she was a founding member of the Fearless Theater Company, performing with Itzhak Perlman at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall in *Claire's Broom Detective Agency: The Mystery of the Missing Violin*. In recent years, she embraced the opportunity to re-engage with the stage, including as a member of the inaugural cohort of the Theatre for All intensive program for emerging actors with disabilities at the Queens Theatre. She has since performed in several projects via Queens Theatre (including a summer 2020 staging of Emily Driver's *Great Race Through Time and Space!*), as well as through its partnership with other companies, including Phamaly Theatre Company in Colorado. Ospina is also an arts administrator, singer, audiobook narrator (*Disability Visibility: First Person Stories from the 21st Century*, Vintage Books, 2020), and an audio describer, whose interest in making the arts accessible and equitable to blind and low-vision audiences contributed directly to her joining the cast of DARK DISABLED STORIES.

ABOUT THE BUSHWICK STARR:

THE BUSHWICK STARR is an Obie Award-winning non-profit theater that presents an annual season of new performance work. They are an organization defined by both their artists and community, and since 2007, they have grown into a thriving theatrical venue, a vital neighborhood arts center, and a destination for exciting and engaging performance. The Starr provides a springboard for emerging professional artists to make career-defining leaps, and a sanctuary where established performance companies come to experiment and innovate. They are also a neighborhood playhouse, serving the Bushwick, Brooklyn community's diverse artistic needs and impulses. Past Seasons have included new work from groundbreaking artists such as Whitney White, Jeremy O. Harris, Heather Christian, Diana Oh, The Mad Ones, Haruna Lee, Clare Barron, and Daniel Fish. The Starr will establish its permanent home at 419 Eldert Street in 2024, creating a lasting cultural asset for Bushwick and for artists, students, and audiences across New York City. For more information, please visit thebushwickstarr.org/campaign.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER:

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 Lab, 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 60 Tony Awards, 184 Obie Awards, 56 Drama Desk Awards, 59 Lortel Awards, 34 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, 62 AUDELCO Awards, 6 Antony Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. publictheater.org

The Public Theater stands in honor of the first inhabitants and our ancestors. We acknowledge the land on which The Public and its theaters stand—the original homeland of the Lenape people. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory. We honor the generations of stewards and we pay our respects to the many diverse indigenous peoples still connected to this land.

The LuEsther T. Mertz Legacy Trust provides leadership support for The Public Theater's year-round activities. Season support provided by **The Blavatnik Family Foundation**

TICKET INFORMATION

DARK DISABLED STORIES begins performances in The Public's Shiva Theater on Tuesday, February 28 and will run through Sunday, March 26, with an official press opening on Thursday, March 9.

Public Theater Partner, Supporter, and full-price single tickets can be accessed by visiting publictheater.org, calling **212.967.7555**, or in person at the Taub Box Office at The Public Theater at 425 Lafayette Street.

The Public's Joseph Papp Free Performance initiative will offer free tickets to the performance on Tuesday, February 28 through TodayTix. The Lottery will open for entries on Tuesday, February 21 and will close at 12 p.m. the day before the performance. Winners will be notified by email and push notification anytime from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m., and if selected, winners will have one hour to claim their tickets.

Members of the Deaf and Disabled community can use the code **AccessDDS** for discounted tickets to all performances.

The performance schedule is Tuesday through Saturday at 7:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday at 1:00 p.m. (*There is no 1:00 p.m. performance on Saturday, March 4 or Sunday, March 5*).

The full performance calendar and complete ticket distribution details can be found at publictheater.org.

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