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**BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY, MAYOR'S OFFICE TO END DOMESTIC AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, AND NEW YORK CITY'S DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES PARTNER WITH THEATER OF WAR PRODUCTIONS TO ENHANCE PUBLIC HEALTH OFFERINGS THROUGH THEATER-BASED COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

*Building on Theater of War Productions' two-year tenure as Public Artist in Residence, and in partnership with Brooklyn Public Library and the City of New York, the new collaboration will increase access to and awareness of public health resources through new theater-based projects for residents in all five boroughs*

*The project is supported by a private partnership with funding from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund, and the Weissman Family Foundation*

**New York, NY** – Brooklyn Public Library, along with its partners the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence, and the NYC Department of Veterans' Services (DVS), today announced a new collaboration with Theater of War Productions to offer more than 75 free performances throughout the five boroughs during 2019. This collaboration will continue Theater of War Productions' partnership with City agencies and community-based organizations developed during Bryan Doerries' two-year tenure as Public Artist in Residence for the NYC Department of Veterans' Services through the [Department of Cultural Affairs' Public Artist in Residence program \(PAIR\)](#).

As a part of the collaboration, Theater of War Productions will add two new projects, *The King Lear Project* and *The Suppliants*, which will address issues relating to elder care, elder abuse, and dementia, as well as immigration and the refugee crisis. These new projects will add to the 22 theater-based initiatives that the company has presented across New York and the globe, which address pressing social issues including the consequences of war and mental health, gun violence, racial injustice, and substance abuse.

In an effort to address the impact of racialized violence and systemic injustice, Doerries' PAIR residency culminated in a five-week, free run of [Antigone in Ferguson](#) at Harlem Stage in fall 2018. The residency and the Harlem Stage production were both made possible through the exclusive support of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF). Building on the success of these presentations, Theater of War Productions will stage a second extended run of *Antigone in Ferguson* in 2019, which will also be supported exclusively by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF). The 10-week run of 50 free performances will take place at St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Church in Brooklyn Heights (157 Montague St.) May 8 to July 13.

"In partnership with Theater of War Productions, Brooklyn Public Library will continue to engage and strengthen the diverse communities of New York City," said **Linda E. Johnson, President and CEO of Brooklyn Public Library**. "Bryan Doerries, his team, and the ancient narratives they bring to life have left an indelible imprint on their audience and we are excited to help expand their reach."

"When we first embarked on this journey two years ago, we were presented with the game-changing opportunity to partner with City agencies, libraries, and community-based organizations to serve underserved communities across all five boroughs and incubate new projects designed to move the needle on public health and social justice issues in NYC and beyond," said **Bryan Doerries, Artistic Director and Co-founder of Theater of War Productions**. "Since then, we have collaborated with eight agencies,

all three library systems, and dozens of community-based organizations to bring our projects to diverse venues across all five boroughs, from a basketball court in Brownsville to a male housing unit on Rikers Island to Lincoln Center. As we launch a new chapter of our work in the city, we are deeply grateful for the support of Brooklyn Public Library and the City of New York, as well as our partners who have made it possible for us to expand on our work and continue the conversations with the many diverse communities in which we have had the privilege of performing.”

For the past two years, Brooklyn Public Library has served as a key partner in Theater of War Productions’ residency at DVS, providing critical marketing, audience curation, and impact assessment support while contributing to the development of new projects. Capitalizing on the existing partnership, the 2019 residency will extend Theater of War Productions’ projects to an even broader cross-section of New Yorkers and expand access to the City and community-based services and resources with artistic programming that is designed to destigmatize conversations around mental health, reduce isolation, promote greater connection among community members, and inspire positive action.

Theater of War Productions’ residency with Brooklyn Public Library extends the City’s commitment to creating a mental health support system for its residents and builds on Doerries’ successful tenure as one of the Department of Cultural Affairs’ Public Artists in Residence (PAIR). PAIR was established to integrate artists into the work of City agencies as means of developing creative solutions to civic challenges. Through this pioneering program, Doerries worked as Public Artist in Residence with the Department of Veterans Services in 2017-2018, catalyzing positive community impact with over 66 free events presented to more than 9,000 audience members across all five boroughs. Theater of War Productions’ Brooklyn Public Library residency is the next evolution of this city-wide collaboration, which will continue the partnership between Theater of War Productions, DVS, and BPL. The residency is made possible thanks to the generous support of leading philanthropies in the arts and public health: the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund, and the Weissman Family Foundation.

“We want New Yorkers of all backgrounds to have mental health support wherever they live, learn, worship, and play, and that requires partners in every sector,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. “Art is a powerful force for change, healing, and fighting stigma that should be accessible to everyone. ThriveNYC was proud to partner with Theater of War Productions in 2017 and we look forward to creating thoughtful, healing spaces together for communities across the city.”

“We are very proud to continue our support for the work of Bryan Doerries and Theater of War Productions,” said **Andreas Dracopoulos, Co-President of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF)**. “This is an important next step for a powerful initiative to address issues that are simultaneously timely and timeless through the lens of ancient texts. We are grateful for Bryan’s vision to use the arts, working with many different organizations both public and private, to provide ritualized catharsis to communities of all kinds.”

“Our office has witnessed the power of incorporating the arts in connecting with survivors of gender-based violence and their families,” said **Cecile Noel, Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence**. “We must all work to find new and innovative ways to connect with New Yorkers while creating spaces to speak openly about their individual challenges. Since 2009, Theater of War Productions has been a local leader in addressing public health and social issues through the arts and our office is proud to support them in continuing their great work.”

“During his time as Public Artist in Residence with the Department of Veterans Services, Bryan Doerries and Theater of War Productions brought people together across the city through the power of performance, revealing shared experiences among veterans, victims of violence, and all New Yorkers,” said **Tom**

**Finkelpearl, Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs.** “Now, thanks to the remarkable programming and foundations laid through his PAIR residency, this new partnership will continue to use the performance of classic plays to open up spaces for empathy and connection, and to explore contemporary issues relating to war, mental health, trauma, and other critical issues. We look forward to watching this extraordinary partnership between artists, institutions, and communities grow and develop.”

“I am consistently moved by the deeply personal and profoundly cathartic stories audience members feel inspired to share at Theater of War Productions’ events,” noted **Brigadier General (Ret.) Loree Sutton, MD, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Veterans’ Services.** “One of the biggest challenges in transitioning to civilian life can be losing the sense of camaraderie and community that the military provides. Being disconnected from one’s community can be deeply isolating—which is precisely what Theater of War performances seek to overcome. As Theater of War Productions continues to expand its work in communities throughout New York City in 2019, DVS looks forward to engaging even more veterans and communities in meaningful dialogue and connecting them to resources, care, and services.”

Doerries and Theater of War Productions stage dramatic readings of seminal plays—from ancient Greek works to modern-day classics—to engage communities in conversations about pressing public health issues that are considered cultural taboos, such as mental illness, racism, or abuse. Working with acclaimed screen and stage actors such as Samira Wiley, Paul Giamatti, and Frances McDormand, Theater of War Productions creates entry points into difficult, yet critical, community discussions designed to reduce the isolationism associated with these issues. Following the company’s PAIR tenure, in an independent survey of approximately 9,000 audience members conducted by Metis Associates, audience members reported that as a result of attending a Theater of War Productions’ event:

- They are more likely to talk about difficult topics (91%) and seek help for themselves or someone else if necessary (86%)
- They felt more connected to other people at the event (89%) and in their community in general (89%)

## **THEATER OF WAR PRODUCTIONS: NEW PROJECTS**

Theater of War Productions’ partnership with Brooklyn Public Library will continue the company’s long-term partnership with the City of New York. As part of the new collaboration, and with the support of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund, and the Weissman Family Foundation, the company will premiere two new projects as well stage a second extended NYC run of *Antigone in Ferguson* following an unprecedented five-week run at Harlem Stage in 2018.

### *The King Lear Project*

Made possible with the support of the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund, *The King Lear Project* presents streamlined readings of scenes from Shakespeare’s *King Lear* to engage diverse audiences, including the elderly, their families, and caregivers, in open, healing, constructive discussions about the challenges of aging, dementia, elder abuse, and caring for senior citizens.

### *The Suppliants*

*The Suppliants* will present dramatic readings of scenes from Aeschylus’ play *The Suppliants*—an ancient tragedy about 50 female refugees who seek asylum in the ancient city of Argos, and the struggle within that city about whether to receive them—as a catalyst for powerful, candid discussions about human trafficking, immigration, and the current refugee crisis.

## **ABOUT THEATER OF WAR PRODUCTIONS**

Since its founding in 2009, Theater of War Productions has facilitated events for over 100,000 people, presenting over 20 different tailored programs targeted to diverse communities across the globe. The company works with professional actors to present dramatic readings of seminal plays—from classical Greek tragedies to modern works—to provide a framework for engaging communities in challenging dialogues about human suffering.

The company uses a combination of theater and guided public dialogue to help communities address pressing public health and social issues such as combat-related psychological injury, suicide, end-of-life care, police/community relations, prison reform, gun violence, political violence, natural and manmade disaster, domestic violence, substance abuse, and addiction. Theater of War Productions was co-founded by Bryan Doerries and Phyllis Kaufman, who served as producing director from 2009 to 2016. Doerries currently serves as the company's artistic director.

**For more information on Theater of War Productions, visit: [www.theaterofwar.com](http://www.theaterofwar.com)**

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