



**NYC DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES' PUBLIC ARTIST IN RESIDENCE, BRYAN DOERRIES, AND THEATER OF WAR PRODUCTIONS EXPAND RESIDENCY TO INCLUDE PROGRAMS THAT ADDRESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, HOMELESSNESS, GUN VIOLENCE, AND MORE**

**A new partnership with the NYC Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV) and deepened relationships with community organizations will enhance the residency that uses theater projects to promote awareness and healing in communities across all five boroughs**

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New York – The NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Veterans' Services today announced new projects as part of Bryan Doerries' evolving two-year appointment as a NYC Public Artist in Residence (PAIR), a City initiative to enhance civic services through artistic practice. Expanding on their current work through PAIR of presenting theater projects to nurture a deeper understanding of issues facing veterans, Doerries and his company, Theater of War Productions, will partner with City agencies and community organizations—including the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV) and the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety—to present new projects that address domestic violence, neighborhood violence, homelessness, and more. Working with veterans, military, and civilian communities, the company will also continue to broaden programs focused on veterans' affairs, police and community relations, racial injustice, gun violence, and mental health.

Launched in 2015 by the Department of Cultural Affairs, the PAIR program fosters the development of creative solutions to civic challenges by integrating artists into the work of City government. In 2017, Bryan Doerries was selected to be a NYC PAIR with the Department of Veterans' Services based on his work as artistic director and co-founder of Theater of War Productions, which presents projects that combine theater and community conversations to address urgent public health and social issues. Over the course of his residency, Doerries will stage over 60 free performances in venues across all five boroughs of New York City. The first performance occurred in March 2017, and programming has since continued in all five boroughs. The residency is made possible by a \$1.365-million grant from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and is co-produced by Brooklyn Public Library as part of its mission to engage diverse communities in discussions on the urgent issues of our time.

The next phase of Doerries' residency includes a performance of *Antigone in Ferguson* presented at Howard Playground, adjacent to Brooklyn Public Library's Brownsville branch on July 15, 2017, featuring four former cast members from HBO's *The Wire*: prominent actors Reg E. Cathey (*House of Cards*), Sonja Sohn (*Body of Proof*), Deirdre Lovejoy (*Shameless*), and Frankie Faison (*Silence of the Lambs*). The project seeks to bridge the divide between law enforcement and communities of color in the United States. Theater of War Productions will present a reading of Sophocles' *Antigone* accompanied by gospel music performed by an ensemble choir made up of police officers, activists, educators, and members of the faith community from St Louis and Ferguson, MO, as well as Brooklyn and Queens residents. The performance will be followed by an interactive public forum that will foster greater understanding about the ramifications of the tension between law enforcement and the Brownsville community.



In partnership with OCDV, the residency will also offer programs designed to prevent and address the impact of domestic violence on individuals, families, and the community at large. Projects include:

- A presentation of ***The Tecmessa Project*** at the David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center, featuring a reading of Sophocles' seminal play *Ajax*. The reading is followed by a discussion on domestic violence in military communities through an examination of the play's character Tecmessa, the wife of the warrior Ajax;
- A performance of ***TAPE***, Theater of War Productions' project on consent and the power dynamics surrounding sexual assault for a special mentor training program for the NYC Department of Social Services' Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP)—one of the most extensive domestic violence prevention programs in New York City that is critical to ending relationship abuse among young people; and
- Theater of War Productions' ***Domestic Violence Project: A Streetcar Named Desire***, which utilizes Tennessee Williams' play as a lens to explore the complexity of abusive relationships.

"The Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence is thrilled to partner with Theater of War Productions in order to raise awareness about domestic violence through the art of performance," said **NYC Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence Commissioner Cecile Noel**. "Theater of War Productions and Bryan Doerries provide a safe space to engage participants on the subject of domestic violence through the arts, as well as a platform for critical discussion and communal healing. We are grateful for our partners at the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and the NYC Department of Veterans' Affairs who have helped us bring Theater of War's innovative and creative approach to public education to New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs."

"Theater of War Productions' work as part of the Public Artists in Residence program has created a powerful tool that brings communities together through compelling artistic experiences and helps address the struggles of our city's most vulnerable communities," said **Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl**. "We are thrilled to see this project grow to bring even more New Yorkers together. The important work by Bryan Doerries and our PAIR partners at the Department of Veterans Services and Brooklyn Public Library will now connect with survivors of domestic violence, homeless New Yorkers, and so many more from veteran and civilian communities. I've witnessed the power of these programs to confront urgent issues facing our city, and to forge new connections between veterans and the broader community."

"The challenges our veterans face every day are complex and broad. Domestic violence and homelessness impact military and civilian communities alike, reflecting painful realities which are too often hidden or ignored," said **Brigadier General (Ret.) Loree Sutton, MD, Commissioner of the Department of Veterans' Services**. "We are honored to be deepening our work with our Public Artist in Residence by addressing these pressing concerns. Seeing the work of Bryan Doerries and Theater of War Productions take shape across the city has been inspiring, and we look forward to continuing this residency's vital role in cultivating novel means of community awareness, connection, engagement, and action through culture and the arts."

"Theater of War Productions enables people to grapple with very difficult issues in their lives, and share experiences that build understanding and healing," said **Brooklyn Public Library President and CEO Linda E. Johnson**. "BPL is expanding the role libraries play in their communities, and we are very proud to collaborate with the Department of Cultural Affairs, the



Department of Veterans' Services, Bryan Doerries, and new partners such as the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence, to bring this inspiring project to our borough and City."

"Theater of War Productions employs live theater to generate empathy and understanding among diverse audiences and communities through discussion and exchange," said **Bryan Doerries**. "I am honored, as a Public Artist in Residence for the City of New York, to use our works as a starting point for conversations in communities dealing with a wide range of challenges in all five boroughs. We look forward to working with new partners such as the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence and deepening our work with community-based organizations to broaden the reach of this residency."

During the first phase of his residency, Doerries staged six performances of the company's hallmark project *Theater of War*, which presents readings of Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* to military and civilian communities, followed by conversations around the enduring and wide-ranging impact of war. Events were staged in venues in all five boroughs, from a theater in the Bronx to a chapel at the US Coast Guard station in Staten Island. During the launch period of the residency, Doerries also presented the premiere of *The Drum Major Instinct*, which was commissioned by BRIC for its inaugural OPEN Festival. The event combined a dramatic reading of Dr. Martin Luther King's final sermon and a newly composed work for a gospel choir to spark a powerful discussion about racism, inequality, and social justice. To date, PAIR events have engaged over a thousand community members across Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and the Bronx.

### Upcoming Events

- *TAPE* at Beacon High School in Manhattan (Thursday, July 13, at 10:00 am)
- *Theater of War: Philoctetes* at the Borden Avenue Veterans Residence in Long Island City, Queens (Thursday, July 13, at 7:00 pm)
- *Antigone in Ferguson* at Howard Playground adjacent to the Brooklyn Public Library's Brownsville Branch, Brownsville, Brooklyn (Saturday, July 15, 2017 at 7:00 pm)
- *Hercules in Queens* at Macedonia Baptist Church, Far Rockaway, Queens (Thursday, July 20 at 7:00 pm)

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### ABOUT PUBLIC ARTIST IN RESIDENCE (PAIR)

Public Artists in Residence (PAIR) is a municipal residency program that embeds artists in city government to propose and implement creative solutions to pressing civic challenges. Launched by the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs in 2015, PAIR takes its inspiration and name from the pioneering work of artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles, the first official artist in residence with the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY), 1977 – present.



PAIR is based on the premise that artists are creative problem-solvers. Moving beyond politics and public relations, artists are able to create long-term and lasting impact by working collaboratively in open-ended processes to build community bonds, open new channels for dialogue, and reimagine realities for those who experience and participate in the work. PAIR artists engage both agency staff and the constituency the agency seeks to serve.

This is the second PAIR collaboration between the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Veterans' Services. Other current PAIR partnerships include Tania Bruguera at the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Mary Miss at the Department of Design and Construction, and The Lost NYC at the Administration for Children's Services.

### **ABOUT THE STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION**

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation is one of the world's leading private international philanthropic organizations, making grants in the areas of arts and culture, education, health and sports, and social welfare. The Foundation funds organizations and projects that are expected to achieve a broad, lasting, and positive impact for society at large, focusing on vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly, and also exhibit strong leadership and sound management. The Foundation also seeks actively to support projects that facilitate the formation of public-private partnerships as an effective means for serving public welfare. In 2012, the Foundation, in addition to its standard grant-making activities, embarked on three major grant initiatives totaling \$378 million (€300 mil), aiming to provide relief support against the severe effects of the deepening socioeconomic crisis in Greece, and to help address the critical issue of youth unemployment. Since 1996, the SNF has made grant commitments of [\\$1.9 billion](#) (€1.6 billion) through 3,706 grants to nonprofit organizations in [111 nations around the world](#). 2016 marked the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation's global philanthropic activity.

The Foundation's largest single gift is the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center ([SNFCC](#)) in Athens. The project's total budget of \$867 million (€630mil) includes two grants of \$6 million (€5mil) each to the National Library of Greece and the Greek National Opera respectively, aiming to support the organizations' transition to their new facilities. The project, designed by the architectural firm Renzo Piano Building Workshop (RPBW), includes the new facilities of the National Library of Greece and of the Greek National Opera, as well as the Stavros Niarchos Park. The SNFCC is a testament and a commitment to the country's future. It is also an engine of short-to-mid-term economic stimulus.

### **ABOUT THEATER OF WAR PRODUCTIONS**

Theater of War Productions is a social-impact company that 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 in 2009 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, please visit [www.theaterofwar.com](http://www.theaterofwar.com).

### **ABOUT NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE TO COMBAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (OCDV)**

The Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV) formulates policies and programs, coordinates the citywide delivery of domestic violence services, and works with diverse



communities and community leaders to increase awareness of domestic violence. OCDV collaborates closely with government and nonprofit agencies that assist domestic violence survivors and operates the New York City Family Justice Centers. These co-located multidisciplinary domestic violence service centers provide vital social services and civil, legal, and criminal justice assistance for survivors of intimate partner violence and their children under one roof.

#### **ABOUT BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) is an independent library system for the 2.5 million residents of Brooklyn. It is the fifth-largest library system in the United States with 60 neighborhood libraries located throughout the borough. BPL offers free programs and services for all ages and stages of life, including a large selection of books in more than 30 languages, author talks, literacy programs, and public computers. BPL's eResources, such as eBooks and eVideos, catalog information, and free homework help, are available to customers of all ages 24 hours a day at the library's website: [www.bklynlibrary.org](http://www.bklynlibrary.org).

#### **ABOUT THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS (DCLA)**

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) is dedicated to supporting and strengthening New York City's vibrant cultural life. DCLA works to promote and advocate for quality arts programming, and to articulate the contribution made by the cultural community to the City's vitality. The Department represents and serves nonprofit cultural organizations involved in the visual, literary, and performing arts; public-oriented science and humanities institutions including zoos, botanical gardens, and historic and preservation societies; and creative artists at all skill levels who live and work within the City's five boroughs. DCLA also provides donated materials for arts programs offered by the public schools and cultural and social service groups, and commissions permanent works of public art at City-funded construction projects throughout the five boroughs.

#### **ABOUT THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES (DVS)**

The New York City's Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) strives to improve the lives of all veterans and their families, regardless of discharge status. DVS is not a direct services agency, but rather a centralized hub able to put veterans at the center of all our efforts. We coordinate services with a range of agencies at the city, state, and federal level, as well as through public-private partnerships.

Our mission is straightforward: to foster purpose-driven lives for NYC service members, veterans, and their families through effective connections with the NYC community; targeted advocacy at the local, state, and national level; and compassionate service, ensuring we make it easier to access services and benefits they've earned. We believe veterans are civic assets whose strength and demonstrated commitment to public service help NYC thrive.