

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 16, 2021, 2:30 PM

CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AND MAKES AN
ANNOUNCEMENT IN CENTRAL PARK**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Everybody, this is something that we have not had enough of in the last year, 2020, and we're going to have a lot of in the year 2021. This is good news. This is positive news. This is hope. This is New York City coming back to life. And what I am talking about every single day is a recovery for New York City, a recovery for all of us. And no place represents all of us more than right here where we are, the Delacorte Theater. What has been done over the years, Shakespeare in the Park, is the epitome of the New York ideal. It literally is. And we think, with some reverence at this moment, we remember Joe Papp and so many other good people back in 1962 decided that these performances needed to be for all the people and took a form which, let's be honest, in many ways was considered elite. Shakespeare was often seen as only for some and those most privileged, and made it open to all, populist in the best sense of the word.

This is become a New York icon, but it's a New York icon not just because it's a wonderful theater, not just because it's free, but because it represents us and our ideals, a place for everybody. So, for this to be coming back is a great harbinger of better things to come in New York City. I have to tell you for a lot of people there were many, many painful difficult realities last year but the absence of arts and culture, the sense that the thing that gave us the most hope and spirit was gone, that was in many ways one of the most painful realities. But I am happy to say the Bard is back in Central Park, and 2021 is going to be wonderful, and people will be able to come back and enjoy.

And I want to thank everyone who is a part of this. I am joined by wonderful performers and cultural leaders from the Outdoor Non-Profit Performing Arts Coalition. A wonderful organization that does great work but definitely needs a shorter title or an acronym.

[Laughter]

We got to work on that, some constructive criticism, just a little there. But everyone you see here – and my thanks to all of them. Every will be bringing arts and culture to the people of New York City outdoors, making sure that people can participate and enjoy it regardless of income, regardless of ability to pay, and that is the New York way. And when we think of arts and culture in New York City, we think of us, we think of who we are. It is our identity. There is no place in the world that brings together so many cultures with culture that literally represents the voices of all of humanity more than New York City. That is enough reason to celebrate, the conscience

that our artist and culture community provides, the way our democracy is protected and refreshed by all those who speak and sing and perform. But if you want a more mundane reason, the lifeblood of New York City is all arts and culture.

Our economy runs through arts and culture. Listen to these numbers. The arts and culture industry in New York City employs almost 300,000 people. We all know that folks come from all over the world to see our performances and cherish those moments in New York. What does it mean for our economy? \$110 billion a year in economic activity. And you may say well, will all that happen in 2021? Maybe not all of that in 2021 but very soon you'll see it come back stronger and stronger and stronger, and we need it for all of the above reasons.

So, my deep thanks to everyone who is here. You're going to hear from a couple of my colleagues in a moment. I want to give a special thank you to Tony Plana who is going to grace us with a performance, and to all the folks in City government who care and helped to make this happen – everyone at the Parks Department including our Parks Commissioner Mitch Silver, everyone at Cultural Affairs including our Commissioner Gonzalo Casals who has dressed for warm weather, with a warm look.

But this the beginning of something beautiful and powerful, and I have a little quote to end from Henry VI, Part 3, "For here, I hope, begins our lasting joy." I think it will be true. I think our lasting joy will begin right here. And someone who has brought so much joy, so much enlightenment, and has taken the idea of the public theater and built it to be even stronger, clearer, louder, better, deeper – I am honored to call him a friend, the Artistic Director of the Public Theater Oskar Eustis.

[...]

Yes, we can confirm, a Cuban can perform in these temperatures –

[Laughter]

You have struck a blow for [inaudible] –

[Laughter]

So, thank you so much. Beautiful, beautiful, and a little indicator, just a little sign of what is to come this summer and how wonderful it will be. Because when I heard you speak, I just felt like time stopped and we all were just hearing your voice. And that's what we're going to experience again right here again on this stage in the summer. The idea, Eustis, of standing in line and getting a sunburn feels very good to me right now –

[Laughter]

And I look forward to joining all of you, getting that sunburn together because people will be lined up for miles for the chance to be back in this beautiful space. And it's going to be a sign of rebirth. When the first actor walks on this stage on July the 6th, it will be another sign that New

York City is coming back for good and for better, for better. We will make it a better city for everyone. Thank you, everybody.

###