

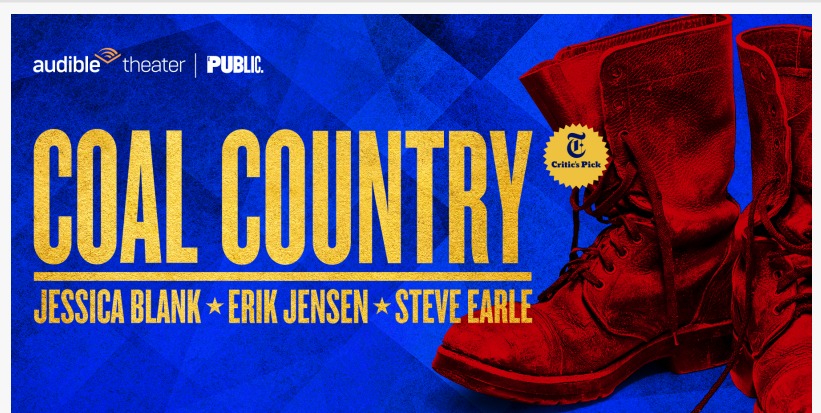
Theatre West Virginia, Audible and Public Theater bring “Coal Country” from NYC to WV for free performance

A Cast of Veteran Actors & Grammy Award Winner Steve Earle Come to Beckley Monday, May 9th to Tell the Story of the Upper Big Branch Mine Disaster

BECKLEY, WV, USA, April 25, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Theatre West Virginia has teamed with Audible Theater to present The Public Theater’s critically acclaimed Coal Country, written by Drama Desk winners Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen and featuring original music written and performed by Grammy Award winner Steve Earle, on Monday, May 9th at 7:30 pm at the Woodrow Wilson High School Auditorium, 400 Stanford Road in Beckley WV. This production comes to West Virginia following a celebrated return engagement in New York earlier this spring.

All tickets for this one-time-only presentation of Coal Country will be free thanks to the generous support of Audible, the leading creator and provider of premium audio storytelling.

Theatre West Virginia Executive Director Scott Hill says that Audible and The Public Theater (well known for bringing Hamilton to the stage) are bringing the entire Coal Country production to Beckley to present the show “about West Virginians, in West Virginia for the first time.” That includes the entire cast of veteran actors as well as acclaimed country and Americana singer/songwriter Steve Earle (“Copperhead Road”, “Guitar Town”).



Other cast members of Coal Country include stage, film, and television vets Mary Bacon (Patti), Amelia Campbell (Mindi), Kym Gomes (Judge), Ezra Knight (Roosevelt), Thomas Kopache (Gary), Michael Laurence (Tommy), Deirdre Madigan (Judy), and Carl Palmer (Goose).

Coal Country, by Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen, the creative minds behind the award-winning docudrama *The Exonerated*, delves into the aftermath of 2010's Upper Big Branch mine explosion, highlighting the indomitable resilience of a small West Virginia community on a quest for justice.

Featuring the musical talents of three-time Grammy Award winner Steve Earle from his album *Ghosts of West Virginia*, Coal Country powerfully combines the country/folk legend's "soaring emotional heft and superbly evocative string-picking" (*The Hollywood Reporter*) with actual first-person accounts from survivors and family members, immortalizing their stories of survival in this soulful yet resolute tribute.

Coal Country's world premiere run opened as a *New York Times* Critic's Pick on March 3, 2020. Before an untimely closing in the face of the pandemic, *The New York Times* called it "devastating and heart-wrenching," *The Hollywood Reporter* said it is "political theater of the most lucid, urgent, and necessary kind, given soaring emotional heft by Steve Earle's songs," and *The New Yorker* praised it as "an outstanding, outraged, life-filled documentary play."

In September 2021, Audible recorded and released the play as an Audible Original (available here), giving the riveting documentary play new life and extending the uniquely West Virginia stories reach to millions of Audible listeners around the world. Coal Country returned to the stage at the Cherry Lane Theatre in New York City on March 10th for a sold-out limited engagement that ran through April 17th.

TICKET INFORMATION

The first 400 tickets for Coal Country at Woodrow Wilson High School Auditorium in Beckley, WV will be made available free of charge to any family members who lost loved ones at the Upper Big Branch disaster, as well as survivors and former employees by emailing coalcountryticketsubb@gmail.com beginning Monday, April 25th at 10 am ET. All remaining tickets will be distributed free of charge by local show sponsors. Free tickets will also be available by visiting Theatre West Virginia's website www.theatrewestvirginia.org on a first-come, first-serve basis, while supplies last beginning at 10 am ET Friday, April 29th with a limit of two tickets per person.

SHOW INFORMATION

Please note that COAL COUNTRY is intended for mature audiences only, dealing with themes of death and loss in the local area and contains harsh language. There is also one graphic but respectful description of human remains in the story taken directly from a family member's

testimony that may be upsetting to some attendees. Viewer discretion is advised. Coal Country runs approximately 1 hour 30 minutes with no intermission.

HEALTH & SAFETY INFORMATION

Theatre West Virginia and Audible Theater value the health and safety of theatergoers, employees, and performers. Attendees are encouraged to wear a mask.

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For more information, or to request interviews with the performers including Steve Earle, show creators Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen, or Theatre West Virginia Executive Director Scott Hill, contact:

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