

PRESS RELEASE

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The Exuberantly Joyful Circus Abyssinia is Back by Popular Demand with its New Show, *Tulu*!

Tickets Now on Sale!

Minneapolis, Minn.—Children’s Theatre Company (CTC) is thrilled to welcome back Circus Abyssinia, the internationally acclaimed Ethiopian circus that delighted audiences in 2019, with their brand-new show, *Tulu*. Running September 13 through October 23, 2022, this dazzling performance is inspired by the story of Ethiopian icon **Derartu Tulu**, the first Black African woman to win Olympic gold. *Tulu* had its successful world premiere in London in May of 2022 at the Underbelly Festival with audiences calling it “hypnotic, exciting...DO NOT MISS.” (*The Black Project*). Watch in awe as a dazzling spectacle of high-flying acrobatics, hand balancing, and juggling (sometimes with fire!) flashes before your eyes, backed by pulse-pounding Ethio-pop music! Feel the energy and spectacle of the Olympic games packed with extraordinary circus acts and be amazed as the world of triumph and virtuosity comes to dynamic life! Don’t miss the company that *Broadway World* calls “a cultural phenomenon.”

“We’re seriously over the moon to be coming back to Children’s Theatre Company,” state the creators, **Bibi Tesfamariam** and **Bichu Shimellis**. “With our new show, *Tulu*, we’ll be pulling out all the stops to celebrate the story of Ethiopian icon and Olympic legend, Derartu Tulu, the first African woman to win Olympic gold. After a delay of so many months, we’re more excited than ever to perform with the wonderful audiences of Minnesota again!”

Derartu Tulu said of being the inspiration for *Tulu*, “I’m excited and so flattered that Circus Abyssinia has chosen to tell my story. I’m very intrigued by the circus arts, which are quite new to Ethiopia, and how they might express and connect with my passion for my sport.”

Derartu Tulu grew up in a small village where she tended cattle and lived to run up and down steep valleys, and over dusty plains where hyenas prowled. With breathtaking displays of circus virtuosity, Circus Abyssinia celebrates the ferocious skill and tenacity of young Derartu: how, unmatched in speed and guile, she chased her dreams all the way to the 1992 Barcelona Olympics and won gold in the 10,000m with a heart-racing sprint to the finish.

“We are thrilled to bring back the extraordinary Circus Abyssinia to Minnesota,” states Artistic Director **Peter C. Brosius**. “We love this company and the way the performers lit up the stage with their joy, their incredible feats, daring and virtuosity. This new piece inspired by the energy, risk, and power of the Olympics has already dazzled audiences overseas, and we are delighted to host the American premiere.”

Circus Abyssinia: Tulu runs September 12 through October 23, 2022 on the UnitedHealth Group Stage. Tickets can now be purchased at childrenstheatre.org/circus or by calling the ticket office at 612.874.0400. Ticket prices currently range from \$15-\$64. Subscriptions are also currently available. Subscriptions can be purchased at childrenstheatre.org/subscribe. *Circus Abyssinia: Tulu* is proudly sponsored by Treat & Co.

Circus Abyssinia: Tulu

Co-created and produced by Mehari “Bibi” Tesfamariam
Co-created and directed by Binyam “Bichu” Shimellis
Choreography by Tamerat Ejeta and Binyam “Bichu” Shimellis
A Children’s Theatre Company American Premiere Production
September 12-October 23, 2022
UnitedHealth Group Stage
All Ages

Creative Team & Production Staff

Costume Designer | **Feven Alem**
Lighting Designer | **Mark Whatmough**
Company Manager and Stage Manager | **Gabriella Cooke**
Tour Manager | **Elshaday Shimels**

Tickets

The Ticket Office is accessible by phone two hours prior to most performances. These posted hours are subject to change.

Email: tickets@childrenstheatre.org (inquiries only, no ticket processing)

Phone: 612.874.0400

Website: <https://childrenstheatre.org>

Subscriptions are available. Please see website for complete details: childrenstheatre.org/subscribe

Performance Dates

Tuesday, September 13, 2022, 7pm (Preview)
Wednesday, September 14, 2022, 7pm (Preview)
Thursday, September 15, 2022, 7pm (Preview)
Friday, September 16, 2022, 7pm (Preview)
Saturday, September 17, 7pm (Opening Night)
Sunday, September 18, 2pm and 5pm (Opening Weekend)

Thursday, September 22, 7pm
Friday, September 23, 7pm
Saturday, September 24, 11am and 2pm
Sunday, September 25, 2pm and 5pm

Thursday, September 29, 2022, 7pm
Friday, September 30, 2022, 7pm
Saturday, October 1, 11am and 2pm
Sunday, October 2, 2pm and 5pm

Thursday, October 6, 2022, 7pm
Friday, October 7, 2022, 7pm
Saturday, October 8, 2022, 11am and 2pm
Sunday, October 9, 2022, 2pm and 5pm

Thursday, October 13, 2022, 7pm
Friday, October 14, 2022, 7pm
Saturday, October 15, 2022, 11am and 2pm
Sunday, October 16, 2022, 2pm and 5pm
Thursday, October 20, 2022, 7pm
Friday, October 21, 2022, 7pm

Saturday, October 22, 2022, 11am and 2pm
Sunday, October 23, 2022, 2pm and 5pm (Final Performances)

Circus Abyssinia: Tulu Creative Team Bios

CREATIVE TEAM

Producers and Co-Founders of Circus Abyssinia

Bibi Tesfamariam and Bichu Shimellis

Brothers Bibi and Bichu grew up dreaming of joining the circus, but no circuses ever rolled into town, only televised glimpses from lands overseas. Self-taught and determined, they came to England as teenagers and astonished audiences with their juggling skills.

Throughout their long careers as performers, they've been sending much-needed funding back home, to a circus school in Addis Ababa called Circus Wingate. It was there they discovered many incredible acrobats who started out like they did: honing their skills on city streets with no expectation of pay. Bibi and Bichu teamed up with these artists to create Circus Abyssinia.

Director and Choreographer

Bichu Shimellis

In the creation of Circus Abyssinia, Bichu combines the arts of circus with Ethiopia's astonishing artistic and musical heritage. In 2017, he directed Circus Abyssinia's first show, *Ethiopian Dreams*, to critical acclaim, and having grown up in awe of Derartu Tulu, he's now thrilled to share her story with the world.

Choreographer

Tamrat Ejeta is a member of the renowned Ethiopia-Winet Cultural Dance Crew: his country's Jackson 5. The group celebrates Ethiopia's deep and rich dance heritage by combining song, dance, and drumming. Tamrat's work in *Tulu* is inspired by the dance traditions of Ethiopia's oldest tribes, reflecting the nation's extraordinary demographic diversity.

Costume Designer

Feven Alem is a costume designer working in Addis Ababa who specializes in the dynamic traditions of Ethiopian dress. She has created for *Tulu* costumes that celebrate the tenacious spirit of the Olympic athlete as well as invoking Ethiopia's great warriors and queens who came before Derartu and inspired her to run.

Lighting Designer

Mark Whatmough studied lighting design at RADA. Since Circus Abyssinia's debut, he's worked closely with Bichu to create a non-physical 'set' of light, color, and shade. For *Tulu*, he has developed a design that conjures, through ground tresses and staggered lights the pillared, star-flecked stadiums of Olympic Greece.

Stage Manager

Gabriella Cooke has a background in academia, but her career path changed when she met Bibi and Bichu in 2016. Enthralled by their vision of an all-Ethiopian circus, she started working with the brothers to launch their company and produce Circus Abyssinia - first in the UK, now around the world.

Tour Manager

Elshaday Shimels organizes the logistics of transport and travel for Circus Abyssinia and takes care of the cast while on the road. With a background in computer programming and a talent for photography and graphic design, Elshaday also plays a part in the creation of the company's artwork and digital publicity.

Children's Theatre Company (CTC) is the nation's largest and most acclaimed theatre for young people and serves a multigenerational audience. It creates theatre experiences that educate, challenge, and inspire for more than 250,000 people annually. CTC is the only theatre focused on young audiences to win the coveted Tony Award® for regional theatre and is the only theatre in Minnesota to receive three Tony® nominations (for its production of *A Year with Frog and Toad*). CTC is committed to creating world-class productions at the highest level and to developing new works, more than 200 to date, dramatically changing the canon of work for young audiences.

CTC is the most significant provider of accessible theatre education opportunities in the region. Every year, thousands of children experience theatre for the first time at CTC. Our student matinees and education programs demonstrably benefit the community, from the intergenerational conversations sparked by our world premieres, to the sequential skill-building that happens in our Theatre Arts Training, to the pre-K focus of our Early Childhood Initiative. ACT One is CTC's comprehensive platform for access, diversity, and inclusion in our audiences, programs, staff, and board that strives to ensure the theatre is a home for all people, all families, reflective of our community. childrenstheatre.org

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