

PRESS RELEASE**For Immediate Release: January 3, 2025****Media Contact:**

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**Children's Theatre Company Announces Complete Cast and Creative Team for
Milo Imagines the World
A CTC-Commissioned New Musical**

February 4-March 9, 2025

Minneapolis—January 3, 2025 — Children's Theatre Company (CTC) is delighted to announce the complete cast and creative team for the CTC-commissioned new musical *Milo Imagines the World*, which will run from February 4-March 9, 2025 on the UnitedHealth Group Stage. Opening night is Saturday, February 8, 2025 at 7pm.

Based on the book by Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson, *Milo Imagines the World* features a book by Terry Guest, with music and lyrics by Christian Albright and Christian Magby. The production is directed by Mikael Burke, with music direction by Sanford Moore, and choreography by Breon Arzell. *Milo Imagines the World* is a joint commission by The Rose Theater (Omaha, Nebraska), Chicago Children's Theatre (Chicago, Illinois), and Children's Theatre Company (Minneapolis, Minnesota).

"We are so excited to premiere this ebullient new musical at Children's Theatre Company," said CTC Artistic Director Rick Dildine. "The creative team has crafted a beautiful adaptation of Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson's book. I couldn't be happier that Twin Cities audiences will be amongst the first to experience this powerful new work."

"I'm over the moon to be bringing this incredible story to you all in Minneapolis with the amazing folks at CTC," said director Mikael Burke. "Milo's magical journey on an NYC subway train is a wild ride. It's full of great music, delightful surprises, and is just bursting with imagination. But it's also a moving story about love and family that is sure to tug the heartstrings. If you come, you'll laugh, you'll cry, and maybe you'll learn something along the way. I cannot wait to see all the ways Milo's journey inspires you, and how you carry his story with you out of the theatre and beyond."

On a crowded subway, Milo passes the time imagining the lives of the other passengers. See his illustrations brought to spirited life in this world-premiere musical, featuring dynamic new songs ranging from hip hop and pop to country. Ride along with Milo from stop to stop as he begins to understand that first impressions aren't always accurate, that his older sister Adrienne isn't always annoying, and that real life can sometimes be even more incredible than an imaginary one.

"I fell in love with *Milo Imagines the World* from the second I read it and I can't wait to bring this incredible (and vital) story of resilience and love to CTC audiences," said bookwriter Terry Guest.

“To say I’m thrilled to be working with CTC on *Milo Imagines the World* would be an understatement,” said songwriter Christian Albright. “I can’t express enough how much I’ve enjoyed this creative process, with a team that cares so deeply about the integrity of one boy’s story and imagination. All I can say is, what if there was a show that could make you feel all the greatest emotions possible? What if I told you, there are mysteries and adventures and fantastical things to be expected from *Milo Imagines the World!*”

“I’m so excited to bring this story to life on stage,” said songwriter Christian Magby. “There are many children who live a life similar to Milo’s, and we look forward to giving them the opportunity to see themselves in him — and to truly appreciate the power of their own imagination.”

Milo Imagines the World runs February 4-March 9, 2025 on the UnitedHealth Group Stage. This show is best for all ages. Tickets can be purchased at childrenstheatre.org/milo or by calling the ticket office at 612.874.0400. Ticket prices start at \$15.

The cast of *Milo Imagines the World* features **Toussaint Francois Battiste*** as Milo, **China A. Brickey*** as Mom/Ensemble, **Antonisia (Nisi) Collins** as Adrienne, **John Jamison II*** as Jim/Ensemble, **Keegan Robinson** as Kevin/Ensemble, and **Janely Rodriguez*** as Melanie/Ensemble.

The understudies include **Davon Cochran** (Jim), **Cortlan Gosa** (Milo), **Tyler Susan Jennings** (Adrienne/Mom), **Joshua Row** (Kevin), and **Boomer Xiong** (Melanie).

In addition to Terry Guest, Christian Albright, Christian Magby, Mikael Burke, Sanford Moore, and Breon Arzell, the creative team and production staff for *Milo Imagines the World* includes Sydney Lynne (Scenic Designer), Annie Cady (Costume Designer), Wu Chen Khoo (Lighting Designer), Reid Rejsa (Sound Designer), Victor Zupanc (Orchestrations and Copying), Amanda Espinoza (Student Actor Coach), Anna M. Schloerb (Assistant Director), Marley Ritchie (Assistant Choreographer), Assistant Lighting Designer (Dante Benjegerdes), Costume Design Associate (Sarah Bahr), Z Makila* (Stage Manager), Kenji Shoemaker* (Stage Manager/Assistant Stage Manager), Joelle Coutu* (Assistant Stage Manager), and Stage Management Fellow (Elijah Virgil Hughes).

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.

Ticket Information

Tickets may be purchased online at childrenstheatre.org/milo or by calling the Ticket Office at 612.874.0400. Ticket prices start at \$15.

School groups interested in attending *Milo Imagines the World* can contact schools@childrenstheatre.org for more information.

Milo Imagines the World is proudly sponsored by The Minnesota Star Tribune.

Milo Imagines the World has a run time of 65 minutes with no intermission.

This production is best enjoyed all ages. Lap passes are available for children 3 years and younger.

A Children's Theatre World Premiere Production

Milo Imagines the World

Book by Terry Guest

Lyrics by Christian Albright

Music by Christian Magby

Based on the Book by Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson

Published by G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers

Music Direction by Sanford Moore

Choreography by Breon Arzell

Directed by Mikael Burke

A joint commission by The Rose Theater (Omaha, Nebraska), Chicago Children's Theatre (Chicago, Illinois), and Children's Theatre Company (Minneapolis, Minnesota)

February 4-March 9, 2025

UnitedHealth Group Stage

Best for all ages!

Creative Team and Production Staff

Scenic Designer | Sydney Lynne

Costume Designer | Annie Cady

Lighting Designer | Wu Chen Khoo

Sound Designer | Reid Rejsa

Orchestrations and Copying | Victor Zupanc

Student Actor Coach | Amanda Espinoza

Assistant Director | Anna M. Schloerb

Assistant Choreographer | Marley Ritchie

Assistant Lighting Designer | Dante Benjegerdes

Costume Design Associate | Sarah Bahr

Stage Manager | Z Makila*

Stage Manager | Kenji Shoemaker*

Assistant Stage Manager | Joelle Coutu*

Assistant Stage Manager | Kenji Shoemaker*

Stage Management Fellow | Elijah Virgil Hughes

Cast

Milo | Toussaint Francois Battiste*

Mom/Ensemble | China A. Brickey*

Adrienne | Antonisia (Nisi) Collins

Jim/Ensemble | John Jamison II*

Kevin/Ensemble | Keegan Robinson

Melanie/Ensemble | Janely Rodriguez*

Understudies

Debbie Downer | Davon Cochran

Milo | Cortlan Gosa

Adrienne/Mom | Tyler Susan Jennings

Kevin | Joshua Row
Breakdancer | Boomer Xiong

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CAST

Milo

Toussaint Francois Battiste*

Toussaint made his stage debut two years ago Off-Broadway starring alongside his father, Francois Battiste, in the Public Theater's production of *A Raisin in the Sun*, directed by Tony Award nominee Robert O'Hara. Last season he was cast opposite two-time Academy Award nominee Michael Shannon, and Paul Sparks in the Theatre for a New Audience's production of *Waiting for Godot*. Recently "T" completed production on "The Savant," a new Apple TV series starring Academy Award winner Jessica Chastain, who plays his mother. T is overjoyed to be alongside such an amazing ensemble, playing Milo in this extraordinary musical!

Mom/Ensemble

China A. Brickey*

China Brickey (she/her) has appeared in *Alice in Wonderland*, *Matilda the Musical*, *The Wiz*, *Cinderella*, and others here at CTC, and was a Performance Apprentice in 2015! Locally she's worked with: Guthrie Theater, Theater Latte Da, Jungle Theater, Theater Mu, the Ordway, and others. More at chinabrickey.com

Adrienne

Antonisia (Nisi) Collins

Antonisia Collins is excited to be returning to CTC once more! She is now experiencing her fifth production here at CTC and feels honored for the opportunity. You can check out more of her work on Instagram @antonisiacollins

Jim/Ensemble

John Jamison II*

Theater (Selected): Chanhassen Dinner Theatre: *Beautiful the Carol King Musical*, *A Night at the Theater – A Tribute to Queen*. Artistry: *Godspell*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Theater Latte Da: *Five Points*. Children's Theatre Company: *The Wiz*, *The Wizard of Oz*, 2015-2016 Performing Apprentice.

Website: johnjamisonii.com

Kevin/Ensemble

Keegan Robinson

Keegan Robinson (he/they) is thrilled to be back at CTC for his eighth production! Here at CTC, he has appeared in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid the Musical*, *Corduroy*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Dr. Seuss's How*

the Grinch Stole Christmas!, *A Year With Frog and Toad*, and more. Locally, he's worked with Dark & Stormy Productions, Full Circle Theatre, History Theatre and others.

Melanie/Ensemble

Janely Rodriguez*

Janely Rodriguez (she/they/he) hails from Miami, FL and holds a B.F.A. in Musical Theatre from Brenau University. She is also a proud Acting Company Member here at Children's Theatre Company, having roles in *Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*, *A Year With Frog and Toad*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Annie*. They've also had the pleasure of working with other organizations throughout the Twin Cities including Trademark Theater (*The Reunion*), Theater Latté Da (*Hello Dolly*), Ten Thousand Things (*Iphigenia at Aulis*), and Artistry Theater (*Shrek the Musical*, *Songs for a New World*).

UNDERSTUDIES

Jim

Davon Cochran

Davon Cochran is an actor, singer, dancer, and recording artist from Philadelphia. He has played roles such as James Brown, Usnavi, and The King of Siam. He has training from The University of the Arts pre-college program and the Institute of American Musical Theatre.

Milo

Cortlan Gosa

Cortlan Gosa is a 13-year-old 7th Grader at Ascension Catholic School. He enjoys performing and has been a part of his school's choir for two years. As a part of the choir Cortlan had the opportunity to open up at the "Gala" event for Patti LaBelle and Gladys Knight at The Armory in downtown Minneapolis. He is currently a cast member for the Children's Theatre Company's *Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* as part of the Who Ensemble, as well as the "Mini Grinch." Cortlan enjoys baseball, art, and putting together Lego sets when he is not engaging in the performing arts.

Adrienne/Mom

Tyler Susan Jennings

Tyler Susan Jennings (she/they) made her professional acting debut at Children's Theatre Company in *Dr. Seuss's How The Grinch Stole Christmas!* She has performed with several organizations, including Dance Theatre of Harlem, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and Spelman College Glee Club. She holds a B.A. in Music and Theater Performance from Spelman College.

Kevin

Joshua Row

Joshua Row has been seen in *Scotland, PA* at Theater Latté Da, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Into The Woods* at the Guthrie Theater, and *Our Town* at Open Window Theatre. TRAINING: B.S. in Theatre, University of Northwestern, St. Paul. www.JoshuaRow.com. Joshua would like to thank his amazing wife, Ellie. Ephesians 1:3

Melanie

Boomer Xiong

Boomer Xiong is popping with excitement to be working with Children's Theatre Company for the first time. Past theatre credentials include *Blended 和* (Harmony), *The Kim Loo Sisters* (Theater Mu/History Theatre), and *A Christmas Carol* (the Guthrie Theater).

CREATIVE TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Book

Terry Guest

Terry Guest (he/him) is an award winning playwright, actor, and director. Works include: *The Magnolia Ballet*, *Marie Antionette and the Magical Negros*, *Milo Imagines The World*, *At The Wake of a Dead Drag Queen*, *OAK*, *Nightbirds* (Goodman New Stages Residency), and *A Ghost in Satin* (Williamstown Theatre Festival).

Lyrics and Music

Christian Albright

Christian Albright is thrilled to be premiering *Milo Imagines the World* at CTC. Thank you to everyone involved. Other works include *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (Alliance Theatre), and *Mother of God the Musical* (Southwest Performing Arts Center). Dedicated to my mother, Rory Johnson. Albrightandmagby.com

Lyrics and Music

Christian Magby

Christian is an actor and composer based in Atlanta. He recently composed the music for *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (Alliance Theatre), and *Mother of God* (Lambert Smith Media). His acting credits continue to span amongst Off-Broadway, regional, film and television. SCAD grad. To God be the Glory. IG: @christianmagby

Director

Mikael Burke

Mikael Burke (he/him) is a Princess Grace and Jeff Award-winning director based in Chicago. Some recent credits include *Short Shakes! Romeo & Juliet* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre), *The Salvagers*

(Yale Repertory Theatre), and *Tambo & Bones* (Refracted Theatre Company). He holds an M.F.A. from The Theatre School at DePaul University.

Music Director

Sanford Moore

Three Little Birds, Last Stop on Market Street, The Wiz (CTC). *Black Nativity; Ain't Misbehavin', Dinah Was* (Penumbra). *Hello, Dolly!* (Theater Latté Da). *Parchman Hour, Choir Boy, Crowns* (Guthrie). *Thunder Knocking at the Door* (Ten Thousand Things). *Smokey Joe's Café* (Ordway). *Nina Simone: Four Women* (Park Square).

Choreographer

Breon Arzell

Breon Arzell {he} is a dedicated teaching artist, actor and choreographer with a B.A. in Theater Performance & Black World Studies from Miami University (Ohio). Based in Chicago, IL he is charged with a passion for storytelling and collaboration; creating art regionally, and internationally. Credits include: Chicago Children's Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf, The Kennedy Center, & more.

Scenic Designer

Sydney Lynne

Sydney Lynne (she/her) is a Chicago-based scenic designer and visual artist. Her work for young audiences includes productions at First Stage, Chicago Children's Theater, The Children's Theatre of Charlotte, and Seesaw Theatre. She is a lover of world-building and a graduate of Northwestern University in theatrical design.

Costume Designer

Annie Cady

Annie Cady (she/her) is happy to be back at CTC! Previous designs include *Babble Lab, Snow White, The Hobbit*, and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Annie has designed costumes for several Twin Cities theatre and dance companies and currently serves as Chair of the Theatre Department at Normandale Community College.

Lighting Designer

Wu Chen Khoo

Wu Chen Khoo previously designed lights for *Three Little Birds* and *Babble Lab* at Children's Theatre Company. Locally, he has designed at the Guthrie Theater, Penumbra, Mixed Blood Theatre and Theatre de la Jeune Lune. He shares his life with his partner Kristin and children Teng Jin and Yi Lian.

Sound Designer

Reid Rejsa

Reid Rejsa has worked in the Twin Cities for over 35 years. Past sound designs include Jungle Theater, Mixed Blood, the Guthrie Theater, Katha Dance Theatre, Six Points Theater, Children's Theater Company, and others. He also works as a recording engineer, musician, and audio mixer for independent films.

Orchestrations and Copying

Victor Zupanc

Victor grew up in Victoria, British Columbia. Since 1989, Victor has been the resident Music Director/Composer at Children's Theatre Company composing music and conducting orchestras for many of your favorite productions. He has worked on over 300 plays at countless theatres across the country. He also composes for orchestras, choirs, and films and his music has been performed in over a dozen countries around the world. victorzupanc.com

Student Actor Coach

Amanda Espinoza

Amanda Espinoza (she/her) served as Acting Coach on *Drawing Lessons*, *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*, *Carmela Full of Wishes*, and *Locomotion* at CTC. She has performed with Jackdonkey Productions, Gray Mallard Theatre Co, Pulley and Buttonhole Theatre Company, Rachel Lynett Theatre Company, and Two River Theater. She holds an M.F.A from Texas Tech University School of Theatre and Dance.

Assistant Director

Anna M. Schloerb

Anna M. Schloerb (she/they) is thrilled to be back at CTC! She is a multifaceted artist who believes theater generates space for play and imagination and connects us back to our collective humanness! Some local credits include: CTC, The Moving Company, Ten Thousand Things, and Open Eye Theater. She holds a BA in American Studies and in Theater & Dance from Macalester College.

Assistant Choreographer

Marley Ritchie

Marley Ritchie (She/They) Is thrilled to be working on her first production with Children's Theatre Company! In past summers she has been a teaching artist with Children's Theatre Company's summer camps. Marley is a choreographer around the Twin Cities where she choreographs at multiple schools and other community theatres including Breck, Lino Lakes Schools and Bethel University. You may have also seen her in recent productions as an actor at Artistry Theatre and Lyric Arts.

Assistant Lighting Designer

Dante Benjegerdes

Dante is a freelance lighting designer and technician based in Minneapolis. Selected Assistant Lighting Design credits include *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*, *Annie* (Children's Theatre Company); *The Song Poet* (Minnesota Opera), *Rusalka*, *Pelleas et Mellisande*, *The Flying Dutchman* (Santa Fe Opera Festival); *The Sound of Music*, *The Jungle Book* (Glimmerglass Opera Festival).

Costume Design Associate

Sarah Bahr

Sarah Bahr (she/her) is a Twin Cities-based costume and scenic designer. She was the Associate Costume Designer for Children's Theatre Company's 2024 production of *Alice in Wonderland*, and has designed with companies such as the Minnesota Opera, Ten Thousand Things, Jungle Theater, History Theatre, and Trademark Theater. She holds a M.F.A. in Design and Technical Theatre from the University of Minnesota. Website: sarahbahr.com

Stage Manager

Z Makila*

Z Makila (he/him & they/them) is excited to return to CTC after *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *An American Tail*. Select credits: *The Lehman Trilogy* (Guthrie Theatre), *Beauty and the Beast* (The Ordway), *Twelve Angry Men: A New Musical* (Theater Latté Da), and *Joyful Echoes* (Minnesota Orchestra).

Stage Manager/Assistant Stage Manager

Kenji Shoemaker*

Kenji Shoemaker (he/they) is a Minneapolis-based stage manager and props designer last seen at CTC for *Drawing Lessons* this past fall. Other recent credits include: Theater Mu, the Guthrie Theater, American Players Theatre, and Stages Theatre Company, among others. When not at CTC, Kenji also works in various prop shops around town, and teaches at Macalester College.

Assistant Stage Manager

Joelle Coutu*

Joelle Coutu (she/her) is making her Children's Theatre Company debut. She has stage managed with several organizations including Theater Latté Da, Skylark Opera Theatre, Illusion Theater, the Guthrie Theater, and History Theater. She holds a B.F.A from Valparaiso University.

Stage Management Fellow

Elijah Virgil Hughes

Elijah Hughes (they/them) has worked as a stage manager in *A Christmas Carol*, *YOU MUST WEAR A HAT*, and *the dreamer examines his pillow* at Brevard College. They are the Stage Management fellow for this season at CTC. They hold a B.A. from Brevard College.

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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 more than 200,000 people annually. CTC is the only theatre focused on young audiences to win the Special Tony Award for Outstanding 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 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

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: A Children's Theatre World Premiere Production

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A joint commission by The Rose Theater (Omaha, Nebraska), Chicago Children's Theatre (Chicago, Illinois), and Children's Theatre Company (Minneapolis, Minnesota)

February 4-March 9, 2025

UnitedHealth Group Stage

Best for all ages!

WHEN: February 4-March 9, 2025 (Opening Night is Saturday, February 8, 2025 at 7pm)

WHERE: CTC's UnitedHealth Group Stage (2400 Third Avenue South Minneapolis MN 55404)

AGE RECOMMENDATION: This production is best enjoyed all ages. Lap passes are available for children 3 years and younger.

RUNNING TIME: 65 minutes with no intermission.

TICKETS: Starting at \$15 and available at childrenstheatre.org/milo by calling the Ticket Office at 612.874.0400.

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