PRESS RELEASE

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Media Contact:
Jonathan White
jwhite@childrenstheatre.org
612.872.5110

THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES/USA ANNOUNCES 2027 TYA/USA NATIONAL FESTIVAL & CONFERENCE HOSTED BY CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY MAY 19TH- 21ST, 2027

PRESENTING 9 PERFORMANCES, CONCERTS, AND STAGED READINGS FROM AROUND THE NATION

Minneapolis, MN, November 18th, 2026– Theatre for Young Audiences USA (TYA/USA), the leading national service organization for the professional field of theatre for children and families, in collaboration with Children's Theatre Company (CTC) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, will present the **2027 TYA/USA National Festival & Conference: CATALYZE** on May 19th- 21st, 2027. This annual national festival offers the largest convening of leaders, educators, artists, and organizations in the field of Theatre for Young Audiences. The all-ages Festival will showcase a range of productions, concerts, and readings featuring theatres and artists from across the Twin Cities and beyond. With a **special emphasis on playwrights and new work development**, attendees will explore innovative approaches to creating, commissioning, and developing theatre for multigenerational audiences. Through breakout sessions and presentations from the TYA/USA Research & Scholarship Working Group, participants will network and exchange ideas, challenge traditional models, and gain new tools to advance their own artistic and educational practices.

2027 Programming Highlights include:

- **9 live performances, staged readings, and concerts**

- A professionally performed **SONG SLAM** cabaret featuring songs from a variety of new musicals for young audiences, music directed by renowned theatrical composer **Deborah Wicks La Puma**.

- **21 Breakout Sessions led by TYA leaders across the nation**, including "TYA New Play Development in Higher Education," "Sustaining TYA: Creative Practices for Economic and Environmental Resilience," From Getting the Rights to Putting It On: A Step-by-Step Look at

Adapting Previously Published Work to the Stage," "Built to Outlast Us: A Succession Readiness Workshop for TYA Leaders & Boards," and 3 panels of the TYA Research & Scholarship Working Group, which seeks to advance and diversify scholarship and publications that measure the impact of theatre programming.

- **Joint Award Ceremony with Childrens Theatre Foundation of America**, honoring CTFA's Orlin Corey Medallion Award recipients, and TYA/USA's recipients for its three awards: the Harold Oaks Award for Sustained Excellence in TYA, TYA Artistic Innovation Award, and TYA Community Impact Award.

- **FREE Pre-Conference Event** hosted by Playwright's Center in St. Paul, MN, intended for playwrights, artistic leaders, and independent artists at all stages of their careers. Participants will engage in conversations about new play development for multi-generational audiences and get a first look at *Don't Scare Easy*, a new TYA play in development by Idris Goodwin.

"The theme of the 2027 National Festival & Conference is CATALYZE, harnessing the power of collective creativity to inspire new ideas, forge meaningful partnerships, and spark transformative change," shares Executive Director Sara Morgulis. "Together, attendees will explore how community outreach, civic engagement, and shared advocacy can strengthen our communities across the United States to shape a more vibrant, resilient future for Theatre for Young Audiences."

"Children's Theatre Company is honored to welcome the national TYA community to Minneapolis," said Rick Dildine, Artistic Director of Children's Theatre Company. "As the largest theatre for young people in North America, we believe deeply that theatre for young audiences is not a niche of our art form—it is one of its most vital expressions. When we invest in young people, we invest in the future of our audiences, our communities, and our art form itself. At CTC, we create theatre for brave minds, and we cannot wait to gather the brave minds from across the country who are imagining what the future of our field can be."

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. CTC's student matinees and education programs demonstrably benefit the community, from the intergenerational conversations sparked by our productions, to the sequential skill-building that happens in CTC's Theatre Arts Training, to the pre-K focus of Creative Play, and the sustained, 30-week in school residencies offered in public schools, which grow with students as they grow, following them and deepening in program delivery as children move through elementary grades. CTC's summer camps provide experiences to build curious, creative, and confident young people. With 11 weeks of camp, each week brings a new adventure for students in grades 1-12.

CTC's depth, breadth, and impact on education in our region is best demonstrated by others who reflect their experience back to us.

For example: Trinity Raw, the Principal of Marcy Arts Elementary in Minneapolis, has long partnered with CTC to ensure that students can experience our student matinees.

“Bringing our students to Children's Theatre Company matters so much. When a young person walks into this theatre and experiences world-class art created with them in mind, it tells them: You belong here. Your imagination matters. Your stories matter.

And when that experience isn't just a single field trip, but part of a sustained partnership between a school like Marcy and CTC, the impact becomes much deeper. We build confidence. We build empathy. We build young people who listen to one another, understand perspectives different from their own, and begin to see themselves as artists and creators.

Schools operate in constantly shifting financial landscapes. But children cannot afford gaps in their development. Partners like CTC provide the stability and continuity that allow the arts to become part of who we are.” – Trinity Raw, Principal, Marcy Arts Elementary

Student actor Mason Yang, who played Jim Hawkins in CTC’s 2025 production of *Treasure Island*, also shared his thoughts on the effect that CTC has had on his life.

“The support I've received [at CTC] has given me belief in myself, courage, passion, and a much bigger sense of what might be possible for my life.

Because of CTC, I am a more precise artist. I am beginning to understand what it means to be a professional. I've met people who have changed how I see myself and the world.

But maybe most importantly, because of CTC, I am more of the me I already am.”
– Mason Yang, CTC Student Actor

Registration is now open. More information can be found at www.tyausa.org/festival

About the Organizations:

About TYA/USA: Theatre for Young Audiences, USA (TYA/USA) is the leading national member service organization for the professional field of theatre for children and families, representing theatres, organizations, and individual artists across 45 states. Headquartered in New York City, TYA/USA’s mission is to connect, cultivate, and advocate for the field of Theatre for Young Audiences by providing opportunities and resources in programming, professional development, research, and leadership. TYA/USA is the United States Center for the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ). TYA/USA hosts an annual national conference and offers a range of professional development opportunities, both for its membership and the greater field. www.tyausa.org.

About Children’s Theatre Company: The mission of Children's Theatre Company is to create extraordinary theatre experiences that educate, challenge, and inspire young people and their communities. Our vision is to create a better world with, for, and through young people. Every interaction we have is guided by the values of growth, curiosity, and kindness. Children’s Theatre

Company (CTC) empowers children, families, and schools through multigenerational theatre and learning experiences that expand their knowledge, skills, and worldview. In 2003, CTC became the only multigenerational theatre ever to receive the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. Childrenstheatre.org

More About the Productions:

Joseph Kekuku and the Voice of the Steel Guitar
Honolulu Theatre for Youth - Honolulu, HI

Produced by Honolulu Theatre for Youth
By Moses Goods in collaboration with Kealakai Center for Pacific Strings
Directed by Eric Johnson
Music by Mālie Lyman and Kilin Reece
Original Oli by Marques Hanalei Marzan

In the late 1800s, a young Native Hawaiian student named Joseph Kekuku made a discovery that would change music forever. Sliding a piece of steel across his guitar strings, he unlocked a brand-new sound. From Hawai'i to stages around the world, Joseph's "Hawaiian sound" inspired generations of musicians and helped shape blues, country, and rock and roll. Featuring thrilling live Hawaiian slide guitar, stunning projections, and a powerful true story, Joseph Kekuku and the Voice of the Steel Guitar celebrates curiosity, innovation, and the global journey of a sound that began with one young inventor's spark of discovery.

Woody Guthrie's Songs To Grow On
New York City Children's Theater - New York, NY

Original Script by Frank Ruiz
Directed by Susanna Brock
Songs by Woody Guthrie
Based on a manuscript by Woody Guthrie
Presented by special permission of Woody Guthrie Publications, Inc.

Four-year-old Cathy Ann Guthrie is full of questions about the world around her, but she's nervous about leaving home. When her parents take her on a cross-country road trip, Cathy faces her fears in search of answers. Inspired by Woody Guthrie's unpublished manuscript and classic songs such as "Riding in My Car", "Howdi Do", and "This Land is Your Land", this interactive Theater for the Very Young production invites children to explore themes that promote curiosity, empathy and community through Woody Guthrie's timeless songs.

Following each performance, NYCCT's Founder & Artistic Director, Barbara Zinn Krieger, will moderate a Q&A featuring Director, Susanna Brock, and Playwright, Frank Ruiz. Their conversation will highlight NYCCT's TVY touring program, the role devising and dramaturgy played in the show's development, and Frank's initial research supported by the 2024 TYA/USA Emerging Leaders Fellowship.

School of Rock The Musical
Children's Theatre Company - Minneapolis, MN

Based on the Paramount movie by Mike White
Book by Julian Fellowes
Lyrics by Glenn Slater
New Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber
Choreography by Christopher Windom
Directed by Rick Dildine

Based on the hit movie, the Broadway musical *School of Rock* is a high-voltage musical comedy about finding your voice. When struggling rocker Dewey Finn poses as a substitute teacher at a prestigious prep school, he transforms a class of straight-A students into a guitar-shredding, bass-slapping rock band—sensationally performed live by the production's young actors with roof-raising energy. What begins as a wild plan to win a cash prize becomes an unforgettable journey of confidence, creativity, and rock 'n' roll. With an electrifying score and infectious spirit, this feel-good hit celebrates music, individuality, and staying true to yourself.

DOWNSTREAM
Mixed Blood - Minneapolis, MN

Written and Directed by Alejandro Tey
Adapted from an excerpt by Johanna Keller Flores of *UPSTREAM* written by Johanna Keller Flores, Ryan Hill, Blossom Johnson, and Saymoukda Duangphouxay Vongsay.

Two young people recruit the audience to help them face-off against a sinister chatbot in this interactive adventure that takes a hard look at how data centers are affecting our environment and how AI is affecting our mental health.

When young activist Sam formulated their plan to destroy the data center ruining their drought-stricken community, they had no idea it would send them on the run from a shady corporation that hounds them from every electronic device connected to wifi. In order to make it out of this, they will need to break their tech genius friend Paulina free from the grip of a toxic positive feedback loop with a chatbot run by the same corporation! Sam will need your help to save Paulina and save their town. You decide what happens next: embrace the AI, reject it, or rise up against it!

Don't Scare Easy:* a new play by Idris Goodwin *(Reading)
Presented at the Playwrights' Center- St. Paul, MN
Developed with support from the Children's Theatre Foundation of America's Aurand Harris Fellowship.

Don't Scare Easy is a supernatural coming-of-age story about finding courage in the face of change. Following the death of their uncle, a recluse sculptor, two adult siblings reunite to sort through his strange sculptures, the same inventions that once terrified them. As they revisit his creations, they recall and reenact an unforgettable summer from their childhood, when, amid family turmoil, they were sent to stay with their eccentric uncle in a secluded house deep in the Midwestern woods. Blending humor and a little bit of horror, *Don't Scare Easy* explores how young people discern true monsters from mere illusions.

The Good Hair Day (Reading)
Children's Theatre Company - Minneapolis, MN

Based on the book by Christian Trimmer and J Yang
Book and Lyrics by Anthony Drewe
Music by Ryan Fielding Garrett

Noah is very excited to turn 10 years old and has a long wish list, but the one thing he can't ask for is the one thing he desires most- long, beautiful, wavy hair. Noah knows that he can have the hair of his dreams if he doesn't get his annual birthday haircut, but he's heard people say mean things about boys with long hair and is too afraid to ask. This heartfelt, witty, and family-centered story features a family that cares deeply, but is still learning to understand each other.

Brambletown (Reading)
Children's Theatre Company - Minneapolis, MN

Music and Lyrics by Okee Dokee Brothers
Book by Kate Thomas
Directed by Rick Dildine

Featuring the music of Grammy-winning folk duo The Okee Dokee Brothers, *Brambletown* inspires young and old alike to marvel at the great outdoors. A forest full of woodland creatures — some with attitude, some with courage- and all with stories to tell- take the audience on adventures that celebrate both the natural world and the natural curiosity of our kids. Created with the Okee's signature style of banjo, guitar, and bluegrass, this new musical encourages all of us to unplug and connect with each other through the wonders we can find in our own backyards.

Generation Now (Reading)
Latino Theater Company, Ma-Yi Theater Company, Native Voices, Penumbra, and Children's Theatre

Company

The five theatres of the landmark Generation Now partnership (Latino Theater Company, Ma-Yi Theater Company, Native Voices, Penumbra, and Children's Theatre Company) will present staged readings of excerpts from several of the Generation Now commissions. Following the readings, leaders Jose Luis Valenzuela (Latino Theatre Company), Ralph Pena (Ma-Yi), Elisa Blandford (Native Voices), and Sarah Bellamy (Penumbra) will speak about their collaboration on this exciting project.

Song Slam Cabaret

The Song Slam Cabaret features performances of 10 original songs from TYA musical theatre writers with music direction by Deborah Wicks La Puma!

Full setlist and featured songwriters to be shared in early 2027.

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