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**THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES/USA ANNOUNCES
2023 TYA/USA NATIONAL FESTIVAL & CONFERENCE
HOSTED BY CHILDSPLAY MAY 10-12, 2023**

FEATURING KEYNOTE BY WRITER MAHOGANY BROWNE

PRESENTING 4 PRODUCTIONS AND 3 IMMERSIVE NEW WORKS FROM AROUND THE NATION

New York, NY, January 31, 2023 – Theatre for Young Audiences USA (TYA/USA), the national organization that provides advocacy and resources to the field of Theatre for Young Audiences, in collaboration with **Childsplay** in Tempe, Arizona, will present the **2023 TYA/USA National Festival & Conference: AMPLIFY** on May 9-12, 2023. This landmark event, which will take place at the Childsplay Campus, Tempe Center for the Arts, and the Herberger Theater Center in Phoenix, will provide a platform for exchange, dialogue, and connection the largest convening of leaders, educators, artists, and organizations in the field of Theatre for Young Audiences.

Sponsors for the 2023 TYA/USA National Festival & Conference currently include National Endowment for the Arts, Children’s Theatre Foundation of America, Dramatic Publishing, and Tempe Center for the Arts.

2023 Programming Highlights include:

- A Keynote Speech featuring **Mahogany Browne** (*Vinyl Moon; Chlorine Sky; Woke: A Young Poets Call to Justice; Woke Baby; and Black Girl Magic*) a *Kennedy Center Next 50* leader and Wesleyan’s 2022-23 Distinguished Writer-in-Residence. Browne is also, the Executive Director of JustMedia, Artistic Director of Urban Word, and a playwright, organizer, and educator.
- **4 live performances** featuring stories of young people and their resilience by Honolulu Theatre for Youth (Honolulu, HI), Glass Half Full Theatre (Austin, TX), Manual Cinema (Chicago, IL) and Childsplay (Tempe, AZ).

- 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**.
- **18 Breakout Sessions led by TYA leaders across the nation**, including “Insights to Advancing Access: Disability Justice in TYA,” “TYA Advocacy in the Time of Book Banning,” “Power Sharing: Colaboración & Creating Comunidad in the Devising Process,” and “If You Build It: Creating New Platforms for a New Canon in TYA.”
- **3 new immersive theatre workshops**, hosted and showcased by Childsplay’s **Write Now**, the institution’s renowned new work development program.
- **Pre-Conference Training Program Co-hosted by Childsplay and Arizona State University’s Theatre for Youth and Community MFA Program:** a FREE opportunity for students and emerging career professionals the afternoon of Tuesday, May 9. This event will include a master class led by Assistant Professor of Theatre Education at Emerson College **Josh Streeter**, a panel featuring TYA leaders including Director of Education & Engagement at Seattle Children’s Theatre **Johamy Morales** and TYA/USA Executive Director **Sara Morgulis**, and networking opportunities.

TYA/USA Executive Director **Sara Morgulis** states, “The 2023 National Festival and Conference’s theme is AMPLIFY, as we seek to highlight TYA as a powerful catalyst to support and inspire multiple generations: our young audiences, families, and surrounding communities. We will showcase innovation in the immersive Write Now Workshops, examine new models of presenting and touring, and highlight groundbreaking arts in education practice, as we collectively envision a more sustainable and equitable future for our industry.”

Childsplay Artistic Director **Dwayne Hartford** shares, “Childsplay is proud to host the 2023 TYA USA National Conference at our Campus for Imagination and Wonder and at Tempe Center for the Arts. We are honored to partner with TYA/USA in this venture. After three years of virtual conferences, we are excited to welcome TYA professionals, students, and educators from across the country to Arizona this May. We are also thrilled that Write Now, Childsplay’s national new play festival, will be part of the TYA/USA National Conference. The TYA world has been shaken by the events of the last three years. We and our national colleagues are looking to TYA/USA to facilitate the conversations to help us adapt to this new landscape. The conference will be geared to do just that. Our field must figure out how to operate in a more inclusive and equitable way while adjusting to new financial challenges. We as a field must be willing to explore new ways of bringing theatre to young people. TYA/USA and Childsplay are both committed to this journey. We look forward to greeting our national colleagues in-person for what is sure to be a dynamic and engaging three days.”

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

About TYA/USA: Theatre for Young Audiences/USA (TYA/USA), is a national service organization whose mission is to promote the power of professional theatre for young audiences through excellence, collaboration, and innovation across cultural and international boundaries. The organization provides advocacy and resources in order to strengthen and diversify the field of theatre for young audiences.

Founded in 1965, TYA/USA is the only theatre organization in the United States which has the development of professional theatre for young audiences and international exchange as its primary mandates. 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 Childsplay: Founded in 1977, Childsplay is a nationally and internationally respected professional theatre company whose chosen audience is children. At Childsplay we believe that young people deserve to experience challenging, thought-provoking theatre of the highest artistic quality. Our respect for children's intelligence and creativity drives us to produce new and innovative works by theatre's finest artists. Equally, our understanding of the challenges facing Arizona's classroom teachers leads us to offer arts education resources throughout Arizona. In the past 45 years, we have educated and inspired more than six million young people and families. We have grown to serve an average annual audience of 250,000 students, teachers, and families.

About Tempe Center for the Arts: Tempe Center for the Arts, owned and operated by the City of Tempe, is a jewel in the crown of a city known for its support of the performing and visual arts. Opened in September 2007, the striking venue houses a state-of-the-art 600-seat proscenium theater, Sculpture Garden, 200-seat studio theater, 200-seat multi-purpose Lakeside room, 3,500 square-foot art gallery, as well as an outdoor amphitheater with capacity of 1500. Patrons come to experience, engage, and connect through diverse performances, activities, special events, educational exhibitions, and programs. Tempe Center for the Arts is an inclusive space and embraces art in all forms and all voices.

More About the Productions:

FEATURED PERFORMANCES

The Pa'akai We Bring

Honolulu Theatre for Youth - Honolulu, HI

This original production introduces audiences to Native Hawaiian ideas of balance and healing by exploring our relationship to pa'akai (salt). This original production introduces young audiences to the Native Hawaiian relationship to pa'akai (salt). Traditionally, pa'akai is food, medicine, a sacrament and a treasured gift. The play follows a family with multiple generations of salt farmers on the island of Kauai, mixing in ancient stories, hula, live music, original songs and plenty of audiences participation into a tasty potluck of performance, joyously served up with aloha.

Created in partnership with the Bishop Museum and cultural elders and leaders, the performance is intended for a multi-generational audience, so audience members young and old can have this restorative experience together.

The Hula-Hoopin' Queen

Childsplay - Tempe, AZ

Kameeka is confident that today she will finally beat her rival, Jamara, and become the Hula-Hoopin' Queen of 139th Street. But then Mama reminds her that today is their neighbor Miz Adeline's birthday, and Kameeka has a ton of chores to do to get ready for the party they are hosting. Kameeka is so preoccupied with thoughts of victory that she accidentally ruins Miz Adeline's birthday cake, and has to confess to her that there won't be a cake for her special day. And Miz Adeline loves chocolate cake. But to Kameeka's surprise it turns out she also loves something else — hula hooping!

The Hula-Hoopin' Queen is a charming celebration of family and community ties. Set in Harlem, this intergenerational story shows the importance of staying young at heart.

Cenicenta: A Bilingual Cinderella Story

Glass Half Full Theatre - Austin, TX

Ten-year-old Belinda is a budding poet and loves to tell stories, but when she's stuck in the basement preparing for a party upstairs that her stepmother and stepsisters will host, she'll have to get creative. It's a story within a story; Belinda lives out her version while also re-enacting the classic tale of Cinderella, using whatever objects are at her disposal: napkins, teapots, and doilies, to name just a few. With these everyday items, a healthy dose of imagination, and a love of poetry passed down by her father, Belinda imagines a bigger world for herself...

When she learns that the party's special guest is (real life) writer Gary Soto, Belinda wants desperately to attend the party and share her own writings with Soto. But to do that, she must learn to stand up for herself and take charge of her life and dreams. This captivating bilingual one-woman performance is a modern spin on the beloved fairy tale and tackles cultural heritage, family, and the power of language.

Leonardo! A Wonderful Show About a Terrible Monster

Manual Cinema - Chicago, IL

Created by Manual Cinema

Inspired by the Books *Leonardo*, *The Terrible Monster* and *Sam, The Most Scaredy-Cat Kid in the Whole World* by Mo Willems

Leonardo is a terrible monster. He tries so hard to be scary, but he just... isn't. Then Leonardo finds Sam, the most scaredy-cat kid in the world. Will Leonardo finally get to scare the tuna salad out of someone? Or will it be the start of an unlikely friendship? The plot thickens when this pair meets Kerry and Frankenthaler, an even scaredier-cat and her monster friend. Kerry and Sam need to make a big decision: will they just be scaredy cats or can they become friends?

SONG SLAM

Song Slam Cabaret featuring selected songs from current or future TYA musical works, performed by professional singers, and music directed by renowned theatrical composer Deborah Wicks La Puma.

WRITE NOW WORKSHOPS

Experience immersive theatre “in process” as Write Now hosts three dynamic creative teams who are making new immersive work for young people. Participants will experience a section of the new work and unpack it together with the artists. Projects will be announced in April. (For more information and to apply, visit www.writenow.co.)

I HAVE A STORY

Join us for a lively and thought-provoking conversation featuring a panel of young theatre-goers, moderated by Childsplay's Associate Artistic Director, Jenny Millinger. What excites them about theatre? What are they looking for in a theatre experience? And, in this moment of historic change, what are the stories that matter most to them?

More About the Speakers:

Mahogany L. Browne

Mahogany L. Browne, selected as Kennedy Center's Next 50 and Wesleyan's 2022-23 Distinguished Writer-in-Residence, the Executive Director of JustMedia, Artistic Director of Urban Word, a writer, playwright, organizer, & educator. Browne has received fellowships from Arts for Justice, Air Serenbe, Cave Canem, Poets House, Mellon Research & Rauschenberg. She is the author of recent works: *Vinyl Moon*, *Chlorine Sky*, *Woke: A Young Poets Call to Justice*, *Woke Baby*, & *Black Girl Magic*. Founder of the diverse lit initiative Woke Baby Book Fair, Browne's latest poetry collection *Chrome Valley* is a promissory note to survival and available from Norton Spring 2023. As she readies for her stage debut of *Chlorine Sky* at Steppenwolf Theater in Chicago, Illinois, she drinks coffee while living in Brooklyn, NY. She is the first ever poet-in-residence at Lincoln Center.

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