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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Adventure Stage Chicago Announces Commission by Lucas Baisch,
Focusing Artistic Vision on Northwestern Settlement's Mission**

(CHICAGO – February 9, 2017) – Adventure Stage Chicago (ASC), the participatory arts program of Northwestern Settlement (the Settlement), announces a commissioned play by Lucas Baisch to premiere during its 2017-2018 season, part of the company's drive to formalize its new play creation process and align its mission to Settlement objectives. ASC creates and tells heroic stories about young people in order to engage the community and inspire everyone to be a hero in their own lives. Northwestern Settlement nurtures, educates, and inspires community in order to disrupt generational poverty in West Town and Chicago.

In the spring of 2016, ASC received a three-year grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, establishing Carlos Murillo as the company's playwright-in-residence, primarily tasked with prioritizing and structuring the company's process for creating new plays in conversation with community. Murillo's play, *Augusta and Noble*, premiered at ASC in 2013 and launched the company's drive toward community-driven original works. Previously known as Story Circles, ASC is re-launching its new works process as "Community Crossings," which can take 12-18 months over four stages from commission to production. The first stage is comprised of discovery sessions, wherein school, youth, and community groups will work with the playwright to inform the writing process. The drafting stage comes next wherein the playwright synthesizes the community's input with his or her own ideas to create an original story. The designing stage will see members of the creative and production team incorporate community stories into the world of the play that will ultimately be realized on stage. The sharing process will present this original work to public audiences and other stakeholders. Community partners will have the opportunity to revisit the plays at different stages of the process before attending a performance at the Settlement's venue, the Vittum Theater.

In a recent interview on *HowlRound*, Murillo stated his appreciation of ASC's close relationship with the Settlement, pointing out that all its programs (including a Food Pantry, Early Childhood Education, Rowe Elementary charter school, and senior citizen resources) are connected by their aim to provide opportunities for multiple generations to lift themselves out of poverty. In close collaboration, Murillo, Producing Artistic Director Tom Arvetis, other members of ASC and Settlement Staff arrived at the inquiry, "What role can Adventure Stage—or any theatre for that matter—assume in the mission of disrupting generational poverty?"

To that end, ASC will apply its mission of telling heroic stories to Settlement objectives, exploring the ways theater and youth can tackle different forms of poverty, including physical, emotional, and educational want. Working within a three-year framework, ASC will craft thematic seasons with concrete ties to the Settlement's larger mission, beginning with the topic of "Literacy" during the

2017-2018 season. Following seasons include "Hunger" and "Shelter." Discovery sessions are already in progress for shows slated into 2019.

The first production to benefit from ASC's refined development process will be a commission written by Lucas Baisch, asking youth what it means to be digitally literate in an era where economic, cultural, and generational divides are widening to the detriment of marginalized communities. Baisch juxtaposes this modern conflict with mythological sources, using stories from Guatemala's *Popol Vuh* as inspiration. Community Crossings are now underway at Goethe Elementary School and Locke Elementary School, and with After School family groups at Northwestern Settlement's Rowe Elementary School.

About the Artistic Team

Lucas Baisch is a playwright and visual artist of Guatemalan, Mexican, and German descent originally from San Francisco and now based in Chicago. He is currently under commission as a member of The Goodman Theatre's 2016-17 Playwrights Unit. His work has been read and developed at Chicago Dramatists, InFusion Theatre Company, Salonathon, Victory Gardens Theater, Links Hall, Gloucester Stage, American Theater Company, The NeoFuturists, The Wulfden, The DeYoung Museum, SF Playground, and DePaul University's annual Wrights of Spring. Productions: *The Scavengers* (The Healy Theater at Depaul University), *A Measure of Normalcy* (Gloucester Stage Company), and *Zipped & Pelted* (The Wulfden/Chicago Fringe). He has served as the Gloucester Stage Company's 2015 Playwriting Apprentice and will be a 2017 artist-in-residence at Elsewhere Museum in Greensboro, NC. Education: BFA Playwriting, DePaul University.

Carlos Murillo is a Chicago-based, internationally produced and award winning playwright of Colombian and Puerto Rican descent. His best known play, *Dark Play or Stories for Boys*, premiered at the Humana Festival at Actors Theatre of Louisville, and has been performed throughout the US, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Lithuania. It also appeared in the anthology *New Playwrights: Best New Plays of 2007* (Smith & Kraus). Other work has been seen in New York at Repertorio Español, P73, the NYC Summer Playwrights Festival, En Garde Arts, The Public Theater New Work Now! Festival, and Soho Rep; in Chicago at The Goodman, Steppenwolf, Collaboracion, Walkabout Theatre, Adventure Stage, and Theatre Seven; and in Los Angeles at Theatre @ Boston Court, Circle X, and Son of Semele. His plays have been commissioned by The Goodman, the Public Theater, Playwrights Horizons, Berkeley Rep, South Coast Rep, Steppenwolf, and Adventure Stage, and developed by The Sundance Theatre Lab, The Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis, the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, New Dramatists, and others. *The Javier Plays*, a trilogy of works, was published in spring of 2016 by 53rd State Press. Other forthcoming publications include *Mimesophobia* (Broadway Play Publishing) and his TYA play *Augusta & Noble* (Dramatic Publishing). He is a recipient of a 2015 Doris Duke Impact Award for his work in the theatre. Other awards include the Met Life Nuestras Voces Award from Repertorio Español, the Frederick Loewe Award from New Dramatists, the Ofner Prize from the Goodman Theatre, the Otis Guernsey Award from the William Inge Theatre Festival, a Jerome Fellowship at The Playwrights' Center, and two National Latino Playwriting Awards from Arizona Theatre Company. He has served on numerous selection panels, including the

National Endowment for the Arts, Creative Capital MAP Fund, New Dramatists, The Playwrights' Center, the William Inge Theatre Festival, the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, and the Oregon Literary Arts Fellowship. From 1993 to 1995, Carlos served as the Associate Literary Manager at The Public Theater in New York. Carlos heads the BFA Playwriting Program at The Theatre School of DePaul University, and is a proud alumnus of New Dramatists.

Tom Arvetis is the Founder and Producing Artistic Director of Adventure Stage Chicago at Northwestern Settlement in Chicago's West Town neighborhood. Tom is a writer/director/performer whose work investigates the themes of identity, family and community. Playwriting credits: *Walk Two Moons* (Dramatic Publishing; AATE Distinguished Play of 2013), *Spark: Chapter One of the Prometheus Project*, *Sight Unseen: Chapter Two of the Prometheus Project*, and *I Dream in Blues*. Directing credits include: *Augusta and Noble* by Carlos Murillo (world premiere), *Six Stories Tall* by Marco Ramirez (Midwest premiere, 2012; national tour, 2017), *And a Child Shall Lead* by Michael Slade, *500 Clown: Trapped* (national tour), *Katrina: The Girl Who Wanted Her Name Back* by Jason Tremblay (world premiere), *The Blue House* by José Cruz González (world premiere). In 2013, Tom received the Orlin Corey Award for Artistic Excellence from AATE. Tom was a member of AATE's first Theater Leadership Institute in 2007, an Ann Shaw Fellow with TYA/USA in 2009 and twice a finalist for a Chicago Community Trust Fellowship. He has served on the AATE board of directors and is an adjunct lecturer at Northwestern University.

About Northwestern Settlement and Adventure Stage Chicago:

Northwestern Settlement nurtures, educates and inspires children and families across Chicago. The Settlement's success results from a commitment to treating every person who enters its doors with dignity and respect, while supporting them with transformational programming designed to disrupt generational poverty. The Settlement has led the way in innovative programming by offering residential science and environmental education for inner-city youth, launching successful charter schools, and adding a theater so children and teens have a forum for expressing their life experiences.

The Settlement's Adventure Stage Chicago (ASC) is one of the only theaters in Chicago to develop and present works specifically for the pre-teen and teenage audience. ASC also offers: Neighborhood Bridges, the in-classroom arts residency program; Trailblazers, a youth mentoring arts program; summer drama camps; and drama instruction in the Settlement's Rowe Elementary School.

Adventure Stage Chicago is a member of IPAY (International Performing Arts for Youth), League of Chicago Theatres, Theatre Communications Group (TCG), and TYA/USA.

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