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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Adventure Stage Chicago announces its 14th Season
of Theatre for Young Audiences in West Town**

(CHICAGO – May 17, 2017) – Adventure Stage Chicago (ASC), the participatory arts program of Northwestern Settlement (the Settlement), announces its 14th season of programming for young audiences, exploring the theme of “Literacy” as the company applies its mission of telling heroic stories to the Settlement objective of disrupting generational poverty. ASC’s “Literacy” season features the stage adaptation of *Akeelah and the Bee*; a commissioned work by Lucas Baisch, based on the Guatemalan myths of *Popol Vuh* and created in collaboration with community partners; and an original piece devised by ASC’s Trailblazers youth mentorship program. All performances take place at Northwestern Settlement’s Vittum Theater, 1012 N. Noble St. Tickets are \$17 for adults and \$12 for youth aged 14 years and younger. Group tickets are \$10 for ten or more guests. Student matinee tickets are \$7 for CPS and \$8 for non-CPS groups. Tickets may be purchased at adventurestage.org or by calling 773.342.4141.

ASC believes in the diverse and welcoming nature of participatory arts. Producing Artistic Director Tom Arvetis recently spoke about ASC’s commitment to inclusivity: “We’ll continue to create new plays that give voice to the most marginalized in our community... That Adventure Stage Chicago creates work appropriate for a wide spectrum of ages, that it celebrates cultural diversity, and that it encourages critical thinking, reflects a desire to strengthen bonds within our community. It reflects a commitment to the idea that certain values—courage, imagination, collaboration, justice, hope—are universal regardless of age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, or family background. The rich human values we share as a community will always make us stronger than the superficial differences that so easily drop us into divisive categories.”

As a participatory arts company, ASC productions feature multiple options for audience engagement. First, each production is presented with Spanish supertitles. Additionally, we frame each performance with a Curtain Conversation, asking audiences to keep a question in mind as they watch the play and return to it after the show; our lobby transforms into an interactive installation; and Learning Guides, including show context and arts-integrated activities, are available for teachers and parents.

Akeelah and the Bee

October 25 – November 25, 2017

Adapted by Cheryl West from the screenplay by Doug Atchinson

Directed by Daryl Brooks

After discovering her special talent, Akeelah dreams of winning the national spelling bee. With the support of her teacher and her friends, she fights to overcome every obstacle and make it to the top. Adapted to the stage and set in Chicago, *Akeelah and the Bee* is a testament to community and determination in the face of social, cultural, and economic hardship.

About the Creative Team

Cheryl L. West is the librettist for *Play On!* and the author of several plays, including *Birdie Blue*, *Rejoice!*, *Holiday Heart*, *Puddin' 'n' Pete*, *Jar the Floor*, and *Before It Hits Home*. The latter earned Ms. West several awards including the 1992 Helen Hayes/Charles McArthur Award for outstanding new play and the Susan Smith Blackburn prize, an international award given to a woman who has written a work of outstanding quality for the English-speaking theater. She is also a recipient of the National Endowment Playwriting Award and the Beverly Hills/Hollywood NAACP Best Playwright Award. Her plays have been produced in England, New York, and in numerous regional theatres including The Goodman, Arena Stage, Old Globe, Seattle Rep, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Bay Street Theatre Festival, Syracuse Stage, Cleveland Play House, South Coast Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Manhattan Theater Club, and Off-Broadway's Second Stage. Ms. West adapted *Holiday Heart* for Showtime/MGM and Robert De Niro's Tribeca Productions, which earned her a GLAAD nomination and a Golden Globe nomination for Alfre Woodard. She has worked in TV and film projects at Paramount, MTV Films, Showtime, TNT, HBO, and CBS. She is currently the Webby nominated writer for the web series, *Diary of a Single Mom*, and is creating a second web series for Robert Townsend's V Studios.

Daryl Brooks has been a visible part of the Chicago theatre scene since 1999, having performed and directed all over the city. Recent projects include writing and directing *The Black Pearl: The Story of Josephine Baker* at Black Ensemble Theatre. Other credits include *Men of Soul* (Jeff Award nominee, Best Revue and Best Director; African American Arts Alliance Award winner, Best Director) and *Curtis Mayfield* (African American Arts Alliance Award winner, Best Director).

The Ceiba Network (working title)

March 31 – May 5, 2018

By Lucas Baisch

Twins Honey and Blanca—sunny, West Coast natives—are fish-out-of-water in Chicago, having been dumped at their reluctant abuela's house by their Anglo mom. Banished to the alley to finish their chores, the sisters encounter a magical tree hiding strange objects and guiding them into the Ceiba Network, an online game with real world consequences. Our twin heroes face increasing challenges as they fight to level up, trekking through a mysterious underworld where they discover their Guatemalan heritage and their true origins. A wildly imaginative reinvention of the Mayan creation myths of *The Popol Vuh*, this original play makes connections between mythology, history, heritage, and the digital world. The first play developed by Community Crossings, ASC's restructured new works process, and shepherded by Mellon Foundation Playwright-in-Residence Carlos Murillo, *The Ceiba Network* asks youth to consider the meaning of digital literacy in a world growing increasingly divided.

About the Playwright

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.

Trailblazers

Spring 2017

Join our ensemble of young artists and professional mentors as they present their 5th mainstage premiere. Since 2011, ASC's Trailblazers mentorship program has inspired young people to lead the creative process, devising original work inspired by pressing issues in their everyday lives. Previous productions have touched upon bullying, technology, terminal illness, mental health and healing, media, and gun violence. Youth and mentors collaborate on all aspects of the show, from performance to production roles.

ASC's Trailblazers program is supported in part by **Allstate Insurance Company** and the City of Chicago's **Department of Family and Support Services**.

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.

www.northwesternsettlement.org

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