

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 1, 2024

### **A NEW MULTICULTURAL STORY INSPIRED BY DR. MAYA ANGELOU FINDS ITS WAY TO DALLAS**

(DALLAS, TX) – The courageous spirit of Dr. Maya Angelou's iconic poem comes to life in a brand-new hip-hop musical play. Created and directed by renowned multidisciplinary artist Paige Hernandez with original music by Grammy-nominated composer Kris Funn, this new work combines literature and music to deliver a new experience for young audiences.

Co-commissioned by prominent theaters, Dallas Children's Theater, the Children's Theatre of Charlotte, The Rose Theater of Omaha, and the Children's Theater of Madison, these organizations have joined together to present an uplifting theatrical experience that resonates with audiences of all ages, touring across the country and making its final stop in Dallas for a limited run from March 16 to 30.

*Life Doesn't Frighten Me: I Am Fearless Royalty* stars four heroes who conquer their fears using heart, soul, body, and mind. The production features material from Dr. Maya Angelou's *And Still I Rise*, used with the gracious permission of Caged Bird Legacy, LLC, honoring the legacy of the renowned poet and author. Influenced by the words of the late Dr. Maya Angelou and neo-expressionism art by the late Jean-Michel Basquiat, this carefully developed production includes themes inspired by actual students nationwide.

Speaking on what led to the creation of this project, Director Paige Hernandez used her admiration of the artists before her, adding her own unique twist, "To say that this project feels like a perfect fit is an understatement! I have been a lifelong fan of (Maya) Angelou, (Jean-Michel) Basquiat and specifically of Angelou's poem, 'Life Doesn't Frighten Me.' I have taught this poem for many years and look forward to putting my mindful hip hop aesthetic into a devised children's theater piece," says Hernandez.

Starring in this production are Lydia Danielle Williamson, Leo Merrick, Lakeetha Blakeney, and Ron Lee McGill, who have performed their roles throughout the country. While these characters may be nameless, audiences can see themselves in them as they represent the heart, soul, body, and mind found in everyone.

According to DCT's Artistic Director/Education Director Nancy Schaffer, DCT's participation in collaboration for this production was necessary for the Dallas community, "It was such an honor to work with our colleagues from across the country to co-commission Maya Angelou's *Life Doesn't Frighten Me*. This is a group of like-minded Theaters who produce great work for young people. We wanted to be a part of creating a piece that will be relevant and exciting for all of our communities. We are beyond thrilled to offer this opportunity to our Dallas audiences to

experience the transformative power of Maya Angelou's words brought to the stage by the amazing playwright and director, Paige Hernandez.” says Schaffer. With a compelling narrative, hip-hop sounds, powerful performances, and enchanting backdrops, this production promises to be a moving experience for DCT audiences. *Life Doesn't Frighten Me: I Am Fearless Royalty* serves as a reminder to all that, in the face of life's challenges, everyone can stand tall and proudly declare, “I am fearless royalty!”.

Tickets for *Life Doesn't Frighten Me: I Am Fearless Royalty* are available online at [www.dct.org/plays](http://www.dct.org/plays) or by calling the Box Office at 214-740-0051.

## **LIFE DOESN'T FRIGHTEN ME: I AM FEARLESS ROYALTY**

By Paige Hernandez with

Music by Kris Funn

Based on "Life Doesn't Frighten Me" by Dr. Maya Angelou

From the book *And Still I Rise*

Used with permission of Caged Bird Legacy, LLC

Directed by Paige Hernandez

Recommended for ages 5 and up

### Cast

One – Lydia Danielle Williamson

Two – Leo Merrick

Three – Lakeetha Blakeney

Four – Ron Lee McGill

### Production Team

Director – Paige Hernandez

Scenic Designer – Andrew Cohen

Projection Designer – Brittany Merenda

Lighting Designer – Matt Benes

Composer – Kris Funn

Props Designer – Devon Denn-Young

Sound Designer – Christy Hernandez

Asst. Costume Designer – Jocelyn Reed

Stage Manager – Hazel Doherty

Run Crew – Becca Bongiorno

### Performance Dates and Times

Saturday, March 16, 1:30 PM – Public Opening

Saturday, March 16, 4:30 PM

Sunday, March 17, 1:30 PM

Saturday, March 23, 1:30 PM (Sensory)

Sunday, March 24, 1:30 PM (ASL)

Saturday, March 30, 1:30 PM – Public Closing

“Life Doesn't Frighten Me” from the book *And Still I Rise*, Copyright © 1978 by Dr. Maya Angelou. Used with permission of Caged Bird Legacy, LLC.

**Photo Credits:** *Life Doesn't Frighten Me: I Am Fearless Royalty* photo courtesy of Audrey Wardian and The Rose Theater of Omaha. Cast: Ron Lee McGill, Lydia Danielle Williamson, Leo Merrick, and Lakeetha Blakeney.

**Title Sponsor:** Jean Baptiste (Tad) Adoue III Fund at The Dallas Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, TACA, Texas Instruments **2023-2024 Season Sponsors are:** Texas Instruments, City of Dallas Office of Arts and Culture, March Family Foundation, The Carlson Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, The M.R. & Evelyn Hudson Foundation, The Theodore and Beulah Beasley Foundation, Inc., The Rosewood Corporation, The Melinda and Jim Johnson Family. **General Sponsors Include:** The Hearst Foundations, The Holloway Family Foundation, Sharron Hunt, Lara and Stephen Harrison, TACA, Carl B. & Florence E. King Foundation, TXU Energy, The Rocky Howard Family, and Texas Travel Industry Recovery Program. **Additional Support is Provided By:** Dallas Tourism Public Improvement District, Capital for Kids, Joan Becker, Texas Commission on the Arts and National Endowment for the Arts, Stephen M. Seay Foundation, Margot B. Perot, The Eugene McDermott Foundation, Ellen and Jim Markus, Central Market, Laurie Sands Harrison, Lisa K. Simmons, Green Mountain Energy DCT's official renewable energy partner. **Sensory-Friendly Sponsors Include:** Fichtenbaum Charitable Trust and First Unitarian Church of Dallas. **Building Fund Supported By:** The Carlson Foundation, The March Family Foundation, Laurie Sands Harrison, The Rosewood Corporation, Anonymous Family, Elizabeth & Bart Showalter, Karen & Ken Travis, The Hersh Foundation, Everett & Becky Spaeth.

Dallas Children's Theater  
Rosewood Center for Family Arts  
5938 Skillman Street  
Dallas, Texas 75231

### **About Dallas Children's Theater**

Dallas Children's Theater features professional actors performing for an annual audience of 150,000 young people and their families through mainstage productions and an arts-in-education program. As the only major organization in Dallas focusing solely on youth and family theater, DCT builds bridges of understanding between generations and cultures, instilling an early appreciation of literature, art, and the performing arts in tomorrow's artists and patrons.

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