



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The power of imagination takes center stage in Ghostlight Ensemble Theatre Company's festival of new works for young audiences

Make/Believe, featuring eight, new short plays, takes place February 22-23 in Chicago

CHICAGO – Cereal royalty, a monster that eats words, the source of all black girl magic, a unique bird that tastes bad. Welcome to *Make/Believe*, a theatre festival that challenges its young – and young at heart – audiences to throw out the way things have always been done and indulge their imagination.

The production features a mix of short plays by local and out-of-state playwrights that were written for audiences 12 and under, but which are also meant to be enjoyed by all ages.

“*Make/Believe* is an expansion of our Nightlight young audiences series, which has always sought to tell compelling stories for children that do not talk down to them, but help make sense of the world around them while also letting them know that it is still OK to play,” said Maria Burnham, Ghostlight’s co-artistic director.

The eight stories that make up this year’s *Make/Believe* festival are filled with young women who turn convention on its head. From the young heroines in *Epic Tales from the Land of Melanin* who reclaim their own stories – and the power that comes along with them – to that classic victim of folklore, Little Red Riding Hood, who decides a feminist fairy tale is more her style, the heroines of these plays face the types of figurative monsters modern children will recognize from their own lives.

Selected scripts include:

- ***Asherella***, by Chicago playwright Lori Taylor, is a take on Cinderella where the heroines are African-American females and the person rescued is a young white male. Asher lives at home with his cruel stepmother and cruel stepbrothers. With the help of The One, an African-American magical being who is the source of all black girl magic, Asher is able to escape his cruel family and live in the castle with the ruler of the queendom. *Asherella* is directed by Laila Rodriques.
- In ***Ava’s First Escape Room***, by Chicago playwright Kim Z. Dale, Ava, Jack and Gus are locked together in an escape room as an optional add on to a school field trip. The strange thing about this escape room is there is nothing in it: No puzzles or clues to solve. To make matters worse, Ava and the boys are not friends. As the boys loudly and ineffectually try to bust out of the room, Ava gets

tired of dealing with them, and takes matters into her own hands. *Ava's First Escape Room* is directed by Jill Olson Stuck.

- Based on histories of real-life women of color and non-Eurocentric fairytales, ***Epic Tales from the Land of Melanin*** tells a hilarious, imaginative adventure tale of three girl warrior-explorers taking on the world. Along the journey, our fierce young heroes must attempt to reclaim the power that was stolen from them and their people. *Epic Tales From the Land of Melanin* was originally devised by Chicago artists Guadalís Del Carmen, Mariana Green, Brandi Lee, Maya Mackrandilal, Enid Muñoz, Alyssa Vera Ramos, Deanalís Resto, Ana Velazquez and Teresa Zoric with FEMelanin; and is directed by Deanalís Resto.
- ***Little Red Reboot***, by New York playwright Sonya Sobieski, is a modern mash-up of the Little Red Riding Hood and Goldilocks tales, in which two rebellious females we think we already know break the rules of storytelling and theatre to get to a happy ending. *Little Red Reboot* is directed by Kristin Schoenback.
- ***The Queen of Cocoa Puffs and the Cap'n Crunch King***, by Brooklyn playwright Corey Pajka, is the story of what happens when a pair of sovereign siblings sit down for breakfast with two hearty appetites and one cereal box between them. A battle cry is heard across the kingdom of New Brunswick. There will be blood—and perhaps orange juice. *The Queen of Cocoa Puffs and the Cap'n Crunch King* is directed by John Gleason Teske.
- ***Scaredy Friends*** is the story of a small girl and a monster that eats her words when she screams. But it turns out the monster isn't evil — like the little girl, it is scared. This discovery, told through words and physical theatre, changes the course of their relationship forever. *Scaredy Friends* is written and directed by Chicago performing artist Carolyn Minor.
- ***Snow White, Who Is Also Called Becky, No Rebecca...and the Frog Prince***, by Oak Park-based playwrights Jack Helbig and Margaret Helbig, is the story of a father and a daughter who collaborate on the writing of an original fairy tale. Unfortunately, they have different ideas of what makes a good fairy tale. Fortunately, they keep writing. *Snow White, Who Is Also Called Becky, No Rebecca...and the Frog Prince* is directed by Lizzy May.
- ***Stinky Bird***, by Los Angeles playwright Seth Freeman, is the story of a young bird who is forced to come to terms with her unique and challenging background. *Stinky Bird* is directed by Jackie Bowes.

All eight plays will be produced on both days of the festival. The festival is curated by Ghostlight Ensemble Co-Artistic Director Maria Burnham. More information, including full cast lists and production bios are available on our website at www.ghostlightensemble.com/make-believe.

Ghostlight put out a call for scripts for young audiences that featured strong female characters and collected submissions from around the world during the fall of 2019. Over 350 short plays were submitted. Final selections were made in late November.

The festival was crafted to appeal to all ages and its weekend run is perfect for families looking for live, daytime entertainment during a time of year when family-friendly activities are not as plentiful. Make/Believe takes place Saturday, February 22 and Sunday, February 23, 2020, at 2 p.m. at Laugh Out Loud Theater Chicago in the North Center neighborhood (3851 N. Lincoln Ave.). Tickets are on sale now via Brown Paper Tickets: \$15 adults, \$5 children 12 and under, or \$25 family of four.

Nightlight is Ghostlight's young audience series with original, adapted and forgotten plays geared toward children and the adults who love them. Ghostlight believes theatre can be a beacon for children, letting them know they aren't alone in the world, giving them a sense of security and revealing the truth that in stories they can be anything they want to be. You're never too young – or too old – for a nightlight.

Ghostlight Ensemble is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit theatre whose mission it is to ask questions that challenge the status quo through timeless stories, immersive environments and unconventional staging.

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