

CHILDSPLAY THEATRE

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Norton Juster's Fantastical Adventure Comes to Life to Open Childsplay's 2017-18 Season!



Illustration by Jules Fieffer

Tempe Center for the Arts, 700 W. Rio Salado Parkway Weekends, Sept. 17 – Oct. 15, 2017

(Tempe, Ariz.) *The Phantom Tollbooth's* fantastical adventures and quirky characters will soon leap from the page to the stage, as the beloved children's book opens Childsplay's 41st season of theatre for young audiences. Using puppets, a mysteriously fun set design, and stellar projections, Milo, Tock the Watchdog, and The Humbug will come to life at Tempe Center for the Arts Sept. 17 through Oct. 15, 2017, Saturdays at 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m.

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Through the eyes of the main character, Milo, everything is positively boring and nothing interests him at all. But when a phantom tollbooth suddenly appears in his room, Milo is thrust on a magical journey to the Land of Wisdom! Knee-deep in excitement, language and math, Milo, The Humbug and Tock the Watchdog must bring Princesses Rhyme and Reason back to restore order to the kingdom.

"We can have all the toys and games in the world and still be bored. If we sit around waiting to be amused by something, we are wasting time that could be spent exploring new worlds, discovering new things, meeting new people," said Dwayne Hartford, the show's director and the company's Artistic Director. "*The Phantom Tollbooth* encourages us to celebrate our minds, to be open to new ideas and to think for ourselves."

Tickets start at \$12 and are on sale now at www.childsplayaz.org or at the Tempe Center for the Arts Box Office (480) 350-2822 (ext. 2). The play is recommended for ages 6 and up. Tempe Center for the Arts is located at 700 W. Rio Salado Parkway, Tempe, AZ 85281.

Bringing to life the Land of Wisdom and its many imaginative characters was quite a creative journey of its own.

"I liked the idea of puppets to take the world of the play out of reality and into some other realm," said Hartford. "With puppets, we are able to play with scale and the laws of physics. Characters can fly; they can quickly appear and disappear. They can lift objects much larger than themselves!"



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The Phantom Tollbooth features Rudy Ramirez as *Milo*, Kate Haas as *Ensemble Member*, Debra K. Stevens as *Ensemble Member*, Tony Latham as *Ensemble Member* and Micah DeShazer as *Ensemble Member*.

Director: Dwayne Hartford

Costume & Puppet Design: Rebecca Akin

Scenic Design: Jeff Thomson

Lighting Design: Tim Monson

Projection Design: Daniel Cariño

Sound Design: Christopher Neumeyer

Stage Manager: Sarah G. Chanis

The Phantom Tollbooth was written by Susan Nanus, based on the book by Norton Juster.

The 4 p.m. performance on Sunday, Sept. 17 is a special \$12 Storybook Preview performance, sponsored by **The Steele Foundation**. Each family that attends this General Admission preview performance will receive a free book. This production is sponsored by **APS**. The American Sign Language (ASL) performance is Sunday, Oct. 8 at 1 p.m.

For interviews or media appearances, please contact Samantha Johnstone at (480) 921-5703 or sjohnstone@childsplayaz.org. High-resolution images are available for download from Childsplay's website at www.chidsplayaz.org/press.

About Childsplay:

Childsplay, Inc. is a nonprofit theatre company of professional, adult artists who perform for and teach young audiences and their families. The mission of Childsplay is "to create theatre so strikingly original in form, content or both, that it instills in young people an enduring awe, love and respect for the medium, thus preserving imagination and wonder, the hallmarks of childhood which are keys to the future." For more information, visit www.chidsplayaz.org.

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