By Thelma Lynne Godin, Illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton

Adapted by Gloria Bond Clunie

Directed by Chanel Bragg

Scenic Designer: Natsu Onoda Power
Costume Designer: Alexis Carrie
Lighting Designer: John D. Alexander
Sound Designer: Kevin Alexander
Music Director: Roz White
Hula Hoop Instructor: Jessica Packard
Stage Manager: Phoenix Jacob

APRIL 29 – MAY 21, 2023
Herberger Theater Center – Stage West

A co-production with Imagination Stage in Bethesda, MD

Running Time: 65 MINUTES
Dear Childsplay Friends,

**Dreams can come true.** Whether you are a young music maker who dreams of creating her own sound, a reindeer who dreams of being accepted for who he is, a boy who dreams of creating his own stories, a girl who dreams of being not only the best hula-hooper, but also the best friend and neighbor, or any one of us who dare to dream of a bright future, your dreams can become reality.

At Childsplay, when we put together a season, we think about all the children in our audiences. What are their dreams? What are their stories? How can we give voice to their hopes, their fears, and their dreams? While it is of course impossible to tell everyone’s story in a single season, or in a lifetime, we believe sharing different stories opens our eyes to the beautiful diversity in the world, and in that diversity, we share a common humanity that is to be honored and celebrated. And who doesn’t love a good story?

Thank you for joining us as we dream of a brighter tomorrow for all of us. Your support enables us to do this challenging and rewarding work. We wouldn’t be here without you!

Dreams are powerful. So, we encourage you to dream – and then go out and make that dream a reality. It is our hope that the stories we tell on our stages and the lessons we teach in the classroom reveal the power in every child to dream and to succeed.

Welcome to our 2022-2023 season. Being here with you has been our dream, and dreams can come true.

Dwayne Hartford, Artistic Director  
Steve Martin, Managing Director  
Matthew Benjamin, President, Board of Trustees

Childsplay acknowledges that modern-day Phoenix, including the Herberger Theater Center, sits on the traditional lands of the Akimel O’odham (Pima) and the Tohono O’odham and before that their ancestors (Hohokam) as well as the Pee-Posh (Maricopa). This place where we live and work has been and continues to be the home of indigenous peoples since time immemorial. Our desert metropolis exists today thanks to the ingenuity of these people in creating a vast system of irrigation canals.
**THE CAST**

*Ms. Evelyn..........................................................* Savannah Inez  
*Jamara..............................................................* Deatra D. Branston  
*Mama...............................................................* Brooke Leigh Davis  
*Kameeka ............................................................* Ryan Jenkins  
*Portia..............................................................* Karley Parnell  
*Miz Adeline.......................................................* Lillie Richardson  
*Swing ..............................................................* Shonda Royall

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**Savannah Inez (Ms. Evelyn)** is elated to return to Childsplay for her fifth production! You may remember seeing her as the Evil Stepsister Hattie in *Ella Enchanted* or Mrs. Tickham in *Flora and Ulysses*. Her most recent performance was with The Phoenix Theatre Company in their production of *The Color Purple*. Savannah is an actress and teaching artist who works throughout the Valley. It’s been a while since she has had the opportunity to perform, so she is grateful and overjoyed to share this story with you. She would like to thank her beautiful fiancé, May, her wonderful three children Aiden, Tony, and Serenity, and her amazing family and friends for continually supporting her as she lives out her dreams on stage! She treats every day as a gift and wants you to know that she is also so thankful to you for supporting the arts! And remember Gratitude is ALWAYS the best Attitude!

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**Deatra D. Branston (Jamara)** is very excited to be a part of this incredible production with Childsplay for the first time. Her recent credits include performing in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* as a Choir Member with Theater Works. She recently returned home after five and half years living in Shanghai, China. There she taught Dramatic Arts at the French School of Shanghai, and toured nationally as the Red Narrator in *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Later this year, Deatra will release her documentary series chronicling that experience titled, *Tour Life: Home Away from Home*. Deatra’s new works can be found at @DeatraDBranston on any social media. She wants to thank Childsplay for this wonderful opportunity to be a part of the cast, those who are rooting for her. She dedicates this first published bio to her late mother, Patricia Ann Branston, her forever #1 supporter.

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*(Continued)*

*CHILDSPRAY*  3
Brooke Leigh Davis (Mama) from Nashville, TN, is grateful for this debut opportunity with Childsplay! A versatile singer with stage credits in Opera, Jazz, Blues and R&B, the Musical Theatre stage is not lost in the mix. Favorite roles include Caroline, or Change (Caroline), An Elegant Obsession (Senator Kelsey Tate), The Light in the Piazza (Signora Naccarelli), and Brooklyn The Musical (Paradice). Other credits include A Raisin in the Sun (Mama), Ragtime (Sarah’s Friend), South Pacific (Bloody Mary). Everyone who knows Brooke knows of her secret love for background singing, with her all-time favorite role being that of Pit Singer for The Wiz. Brooke comes to Arizona with more than 35 years of experience as a performing artist and 20 years in nonprofit management to develop The Pipeline Performing Arts, a performing arts organization for all ages. The arts should be accessible to everyone!

Ryan Jenkins (Kameeka) is excited to grace the Childsplay stage for the first time! She has also worked with Ronin Theatre Company, Black Theatre Troupe, Flagstaff Shakespeare Festival, Stray Cat Theatre, Tier5 Theatre Company, Southwest Shakespeare Company, Virtual Theatre of Arizona, iTheatre Collaborative, and Nearly Naked Theatre. Ryan is originally from Chicago, Illinois, and earned her Acting BFA from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2014.

Karley Parnell (Portia) is excited to be working with Childsplay Theatre again. Karley is a recent (2022) graduate of Arizona State with a degree in Theater: Acting. Some of her favorite roles have been Natalie in Good Friday and Effiel in Dreamgirls. She would like to give a big thank you to Childsplay Theatre for this opportunity to highlight underrepresented voices and inspire audiences.

Lillie Richardson (Miz Adeline) a professional Regional Theatre Actress, joined Childsplay’s ensemble in 1988, touring for several seasons and has continued as a teaching artist for the company. Childsplay productions include, The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show, Velveteen Rabbit, the Owl and the Pussycat, Once Upon a Mattress, and Embroidered Yarns. Regional theatre credits include, Glass Menagerie, Scapin and Sunshine Boys with ATC: Detroit 67, Lines In The Dust, Rasheeda Speaking and Fences (AriZoni Best Actress) with BTT; Critically acclaimed Angels in
America Part I and II, Doubt, and Christmas Carol with Actors Theatre; and Wit and Lion in Winter with The Fulton. Film and television credits include, Running with the Devil (with Laurence Fishbourne), Crash (Starz), This Bitter Earth; Truth about Jane; Young Riders; SEDUCED AND BETRAYED and The Fugitive (with Harrison Ford). She dedicates her performance to her mother, the Ultimate Queen, Helen V. Richardson who recently left this world and now is the Angel watching over her.

**Shonda Royall (Swing)** hails from the windy city of Chicago, but currently resides in Phoenix, AZ. Within the past year, Shonda’s performance credits have included Jane Bingley in Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley (Arizona Theatre Company), Amina in SheepDog (Stray Cat Theatre) and Vee in Being Black Outside (Boise Contemporary Theatre). Most recently, Shonda has starred as Black Barbara in BBQ, Molly Cunningham in Joe Turner’s Come and Gone (both produced at Black Theatre Troupe) and Boise Contemporary Theatre’s Tiny Beautiful Things. Shonda is honored to be working alongside such amazing Actors as she steps into the role of Understudy in this outstanding production of The Hula-Hoopin’ Queen.

**THE CREATIVE TEAM**

**Chanel Bragg (Director)** is ecstatic to make her Childsplay directorial debut with The Hula Hoopin’ Queen. Childsplay performance credits include: Super Cowgirl and Mighty Miracle (2014) and Good Night Moon (2016). Chanel was appointed as Arizona Theatre Company’s Associate Artistic Director in 2020. Most notably, she founded The United Colours of Arizona Theatre. Noteworthy highlights: The Great 48 (Phoenix Magazine), and 10 rising Black Women to Watch in the American Theatre (American Theatre Magazine). Regional directing credits: Stick Fly (St Louis Rep) and The Glass Menagerie (Arizona Theatre Co.). New works: Reggie Hoops by Pulitzer Nominee Kris Diaz (Profile Theatre), Los Feliz by Pulitzer nominee Christopher Oscar Pena (UC Santa Barbara), and lastly Enferma, ClickBait (The Phoenix Theatre Company). Favorite Local directing credits: For Colored Girls..., Lizzie, The Wolves, The Piano Lesson, Hair, The Last Five Years, and The Alexander Project - a touring Hamilton revue in conjunction with Live Nation.

**Natsu Onoda Power (Scenic Designer)** is a Washington, D.C.-based adapter, director, and designer. Favorite set design credits include Anime Momotaro and Sinbad (Imagination Stage), The Lathe of Heaven (Spooky Action Theater, Helen Hayes Award) and Dear Mapel (Mosaic Theater). She is a Professor of Theater and Performance Studies at Georgetown University.
THE CREATIVE TEAM (Continued)

Alexis Carrie (Costume Designer) is a L.A.-based costume designer and social justice warrior. Recent and upcoming film, television, and theatrical credits include A Place of Bones (Goldrush Entertainment), Legacies Season 4 (Warner Brothers) What to Send Up When It Goes Down (Congo Square Theater) Untitled Baby Play (IAMA Theater). She has a MFA in Costume Design from Carnegie Mellon University and is a proud founding member of First Floor Theater in Chicago. You can find her work at alexiscarrie.com

John D. Alexander (Lighting Designer) has worked with Childsplay in the past on Snowy Day and Other Stories. Recent designs include: Selling Kabul (Signature Theatre); Bars and Measures (Mosaic Theatre Co.); From the Mississippi Delta (Westport Country Playhouse); Detroit ’67 (TheatreSquared); Crying on Television (Everyman Theatre); Quamino’s Map (Chicago Opera Theatre) and B.R.O.K.E.N. Code B.I.R.D. Switching (Berkshire Theatre Group). OFF-BROADWAY: Lambs 2 Slaughter (Cherry Lane Theatre); Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence (New Victory Theater). Upcoming work includes: One in Two (Mosaic Theatre Co.). He holds a BFA in Lighting Design from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. www.JohnDAlexanderLightingDesign.com

Kevin Lee Alexander (Sound Designer) is excited to join Childsplay Theatre on this production of The Hula Hoopin’ Queen. Recent regional credits include Acoustic Rooster’s Barnyard Boogie (Kennedy Center’s Theatre for Young Audiences); Once on this Island (Constellation Theatre); Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical and Oliver (New Repertory Theatre); Day of Absence (Theater Alliance); Huckleberry Finn’s Big River (Adventure Theatre MTC); Bright Star (Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma); and Step Afrika’s The Migration: Reflections of Jacob Lawrence (National Tour). Kevin holds a Master of Science in Entertainment Business from Full Sail University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from the University of Maryland. He is also a member of IATSE Local USA 829.

Roz White (Music Director) is a theatre consultant, vocalist, actress, and teaching artist. She is currently starring as Zelma Bullock in TINA the Tina Turner Musical, now on a North American tour. Her theatre credits include Odessa in The Amen Corner at Shakespeare Theater Company, Louise in Seven Guitars at Arena Stage, Pearl Bailey in Pearl Bailey by Request at MetroStage, and Sister Rosetta Tharpe in Marie and Rosetta at Mosaic Theatre Company of DC. She won a Helen Hayes award for her portrayal of “Rhythm in Tom Jones’ Bessie’s Blues at Studio Theatre. Roz has worked as a featured and supporting vocalist with Yolanda Adams (Grammy Award-winning project “The Experience” Live in DC), Chante’ Moore, Stevie Wonder,
The O’Jays, Gerald Levert, Ray Charles, Patti Austin, James Ingram, and Michael Jackson. Roz recorded two hit dance singles ‘Bad For Me’ and ‘A Little More Love’ which gained recognition in Billboard magazine’s New and Noteworthy column. She can also be heard as the featured vocalist on the R&B smash “The Moon” by independent soul star- Howard University alum, Eric Roberson. A Washington, DC native, Roz graduated from Duke Ellington School of the Arts where she served as a faculty member for over ten years. She also graduated from Howard University with a BFA in Musical Theatre and has served as an adjunct professor.

Phoenix Jacob (Resident Stage Manager) is a Stage Manager and Theatrical Technician based in Phoenix, AZ. He joins Childsplay as Resident Stage Manager this season, after managing past productions of Eric & Elliott (2020), Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (2021), and The Very Hungry Caterpillar (2022). He received his Bachelor’s degree specializing in Design/Technical Theatre from Bowling Green State University in 2017, and during that time was awarded three certificates of merit from the KCACTF for his work as Stage Manager on Middletown (2016), The Drowsy Chaperone (2016), and Twelfth Night (2017). He was also granted the 2017 Outstanding Senior Award in Theatrical Production. He pursued a Master of Arts in Theatre from Bowling Green State University in 2018-19, where his research focused on transgender theatre and adaptations of Shakespeare for contemporary cultural contexts, before relocating to the Phoenix area in 2019 to pursue stage management full-time.

Gloria Bond Clunie (Playwright) is an award-winning playwright, educator, and director. She is a founding member of the Playwriting Ensemble at Chicago’s Regional Tony Award-winning Victory Gardens Theater where her plays North Star, Living Green and Shoes premiered and the founding Artistic Director of Evanston’s Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre. Other works by this Northwestern University graduate (B.A. Theater, MFA-Directing) include Sweet Water Taste, Smoke, Quark, Buck Naked, Bankruptcy, Tall Enough and A Shot#LoveStories inspired by Black Lives Matter. This Dramatist Guild Fellow has numerous awards including a Chicago Jeff, Theodore Ward African-American Playwriting Prizes, NEA and Illinois Arts Council Fellowships, and the Evanston Mayor’s Award for the Arts. She is thrilled that this spring Giraffes Can’t Dance - The Musical premieres at Bay Area Children’s Theatre, My Wonderful Birthday Suit will be at Raleigh Little Theatre, The Poppy premieres at DePaul University’s The Theatre School and Last Stop On Market Street will be produced at The Rose in Omaha and Dallas Children’s Theatre.
Dwayne Hartford (Artistic Director) moved to Arizona in 1989. He answered an ad in the paper for an acting job. That job was for Childsplay. In 1992, he originated the role of the Father in Childsplay’s world premiere production of The Yellow Boat. Dwayne has directed many shows for Childsplay, including: Ella Enchanted, The Phantom Tollbooth, and Flora & Ulysses. The first play he wrote, Eric and Elliot, received the 2005 Distinguished Play Award from the American Alliance of Theatre & Education (AATE). The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane received the same award in 2018. Dwayne’s plays have been produced professionally around the country including Seattle Children’s Theatre, Dallas Children’s Theatre, Chicago Children’s Theatre, and South Coast Repertory. Dwayne became Childsplay’s Artistic Director in 2016 upon the retirement of his mentor, the founder of the company, David Saar. Dwayne holds a BFA in musical theatre from the Boston Conservatory. He did graduate work in directing at Boston University. He is from the very small town of Smithfield, Maine.

Steve Martin (Managing Director) is in his 22nd season as Managing Director at Childsplay. During this time, the company has moved into the Sybil B. Harrington Campus for Imagination and Wonder; secured significant ongoing funding from the US Department of Education for arts education programming and research throughout the metro Phoenix area; received funding from national foundations including the Hearst Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Trust, and the Shubert Foundation; received substantial support from local foundations including the Legacy Foundation, Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, The Flinn Foundation, Steele Foundation, and the Helios Education Foundation; and produced more than 35 world premieres. He is a native of Toledo, Ohio, and a graduate of the University of Toledo. Martin is currently on the board of East Valley Partnership and formerly served on the boards of Arizona Citizens for the Arts (past President), TYA/USA - the national organization for theatre for young audiences and LORT/League of Resident Theatres. Prior to joining Childsplay, he was Assistant Managing Director at the Alliance Theatre Company in Atlanta, Georgia, and the Managing Director at Virginia Stage Company in Norfolk, Virginia.
Summer Classes

REGISTER NOW!

Summer classes ages 4-18 are selling out! Register and secure your spot in your favorite classes.
“One of the underlying core values of Childsplay is the notion of ensemble. There is a resident group of theatre artists (our Associate Artists) who, in collaboration with the Artistic Director, are responsible for planning and creating the artistic products that illustrate Childsplay’s mission. But these artists do not create in isolation. Everyone who works at Childsplay—other artists, technicians, educators, administrators and trustees—is a part of this resident ensemble. This mindset guides the way our work is created, the way it is marketed and the way it is delivered. Ideally, all of these individuals are housed under one roof, allowing for the free and open exchange of ideas and opinions.” —Childsplay’s Strategic Plan 2012

Dwayne Hartford .................. Artistic Director
Steve Martin ..................... Managing Director
Jenny Millinger .................. Associate Artistic Director
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Montana Thompson, Master Carpenter
Rachel Solis, Scenic Paint Charge

SOUND
Kenseye Fort, Sound Supervisor

ASL INTERPRETERS
Judy Robbins
Dawn Schoenberger

(Continued)
Here’s what they said:

Karley Purnell: “Growing up, my Miz Adeline was my next-door neighbor, Miss Mary. Some of my favorite memories were during the summers; we would eat water ice, do arts and crafts, and work in the garden.”

Savannah Inez: “An important elder in my life growing up was my grandmother Savannah. She brought so much joy, love, & laughter into my life but also taught me a lot of really great life lessons that I still remember to this day.”

Ryan Jenkins: “My grandparents, my great-grandmother, and many of my grade school educators!”

Deatra D. Branston: “I had so many important and present elders in my life that it’s hard to choose. However, my oldest Auntie Jeal, has always told the best stories about our family history and life. I appreciate her knowledge and wisdom and will cherish it forever.”

ASK AN ACTOR!

We asked the cast from The Hula Hoopin’ Queen:

“Miz Adeline is a really important adult in Kameeka’s life. Who was an important elder to you growing up?”

CHILDSPLAY THEATRE

480-921-5700 | CHILDSPLAYAZ.ORG

› Childsplay, founded in 1977, is a non-profit professional theatre company of adult actors, teaching and performing for young audiences and families.

› Childsplay’s mission 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, those hallmarks of childhood that are the keys to the future.”

› Childsplay launched its first national tour in 2007, with Tomás and the Library Lady. Since then the company has completed 10 more national tours throughout the United States and Canada. Next season, Childsplay will send Tomás and the Library Lady out on its third national tour!

› Childsplay’s administrative offices, classrooms, rehearsal halls, prop and costume shops are located in the Sybil B. Harrington Campus for Imagination and Wonder at Mitchell Park, 900 S. Mitchell Drive, in Tempe.

› Childsplay is a constituent of Arizona Citizens for the Arts, East Valley Partnership, Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for American theatre; TYA/USA, the US Chapter of ASSITEJ, the international organization for theatre for young audiences; the Tempe Chamber of Commerce; the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Alliance of Arizona Non-Profits; and the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE)
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Childsplay gratefully acknowledges our Lifetime Members, who have made cumulative gifts of $20,000 or more as of March 14, 2023.

*Indicates Annual Society Membership as well

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The Society for Imagination and Wonder honors those who have made a significant investment to Childsplay and in supporting the leaders of the future. Thank you for helping us share imagination, wonder and joy with children of all ages.
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Caleb Reese  
Salt River Project  
Scottsdale Arts

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