



Contact: Jenna Corcoran
Marketing Coordinator, Wheelock Family Theatre
Email: jcorc@bu.edu
Website: www.wheelockfamilytheatre.org

**WHELOCK FAMILY THEATRE and THE GOTTABEES
ANNOUNCES**

**THE VIRTUAL PREMIERE OF
*A KIDS PLAY ABOUT RACISM***

AWARD-WINNING TYA ARTIST KHALIA DAVIS LEADS AN ALL BLACK CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN ADAPTING JELANI MEMORY'S *A KIDS BOOK ABOUT RACISM*

WHELOCK FAMILY THEATRE AND THE GOTTABEES ALONG WITH 36 TYA THEATRES ACROSS THE NATION ARE CO-PRODUCING THE VIRTUAL PERFORMANCE, LED BY BAY AREA CHILDREN'S THEATRE, SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE, AND ALLIANCE THEATRE

Boston, MA, July 21, 2020 – Wheelock Family Theatre and The Gottabees join a groundbreaking collaboration among 37 Theatres for Young Audiences across the United States, led by the lead producing team of Bay Area Children's Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, and Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, will present the virtual premiere of *A Kids Play About Racism*, a theatrical adaptation of Jelani Memory's *A Kids Book About Racism*. Premiering August 1 and 2 on the streaming platform Broadway On Demand, the new work is adapted and directed by award-winning director and TYA artist **Khalia Davis** and will be brought to life by an entirely Black and BIPOC cast and creative team from across the United States. *A Kids Play About Racism* will utilize theatre to offer young children and families a way to engage in meaningful conversation about race. As part of the production, educational materials developed by Seattle Children's Theatre in collaboration with the Northwest African American Museum will extend the experience and enhance age-appropriate engagement. All 37 partnering theatres are members of Theatre for Young Audiences USA (TYA/USA), the national organization representing the field of theatre for children and family audiences.

"I jumped at the opportunity to adapt Jelani Memory's book *A Kids Book About Racism* into a theatrical piece for young audiences simply because it meant we were recognizing the importance of including children in these difficult conversations," shared lead artist Khalia Davis. "This show embraces the full

spectrum of emotional response children may have as they navigate comprehending racism and how it may affect them."

"When I wrote *A Kids Book About Racism*, I wrote it from my own kids. I never could have imagined it would have spread so far and wide to thousands of kids all over the world, or turned into a nationwide theatrical event. I am thrilled to see what Khalia and these other amazing artists create," offered Jelani Memory, whose book provides the inspiration for the production. *A Kids Book about Racism* is part of Memory's children's book publishing company A Kids Book About, which offers titles on a range of big topics to explore including feminism, belonging, gratitude, cancer, and many more.

The scale and breadth of this co-production has been made possible in part through the network cultivated by TYA/USA, which connects organizations and artists across the country focused on theatre for young people and families. Through the last few months, TYA/USA has offered a range of programming to provide deep connections and resource sharing in response to COVID-19. Through this network, TYA theatres across the country have been able to come together to find ways to support each other and their audiences through new and innovative collaboration models.

A Kids Play About Racism will be streaming on Broadway On Demand on August 1 and 2 along with accompanying interviews and educational videos.

A Kids Play About Racism is adapted and directed by Khalia Davis, with music composed by Justin Ellington and Costume Design by Ron McCann (California). It will be performed by Davied Morales (California), Angel Adedokun (California), Moses Goods (Hawaii), Rapheal Hamilton (Arizona), Isaiah Harris (Texas), Jessenia Ingram (Georgia), and Regan Sims (New York).

The work is produced by Bay Area Children's Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, and Alliance Theatre, in partnership with Adventure Theatre MTC, Arts on the Horizon, Children's Theatre of Charlotte, Chicago Children's Theatre, Children's Theater of Madison, Children's Theatre Company, Childsplay, Children's Theatre of Cincinnati, Coterie Theatre, Dallas Children's Theater, Dare to Dream Theatre, Des Moines Performing Arts, Filament Theatre, First Stage, Honolulu Theatre for Youth, Imagination Stage, The Kennedy Center, Magik Theatre, Metro Theater Company, Nashville Children's Theatre, New York City Children's Theater, Oregon Children's Theatre, Orlando Repertory Theatre, Pink Umbrella Theater Company, ReNew Productions, Rose Theater, Seattle Children's Theatre The Growing Stage - The Children's Theatre of New Jersey, The Gottabees, The Open Eye Theater, TheatreWorksUSA, Trike Theatre, Trusty Sidekick Theater Company, Wheelock Family Theatre at Boston University, and Orpheum Theatre Group.

About Khalia Davis: Khalia Davis (she/her) is a bicoastal multidisciplinary artist splitting her time between the San Francisco/Bay Area and New York. Directed and devised new works with prominent theaters such as Bay Area Children's Theater, Atlantic Theater Company's Atlantic for Kids, New York City Children's Theater, Spellbound Theatre and more. Ms. Davis recently served as the Director of Inclusion and Education with Brooklyn Children's Theatre restructuring their children's musical theater programming through an anti-racism lens and currently teaches with New York City Children's Theater, the Atlantic Acting School, and for Disney Theatrical Group leading music and movement workshops and facilitating audience and community engagement. She is also an Artistic Associate for the nationally-known arts education organization The Story Pirates. As a performer, she has worked regionally and toured nationally on both coasts. Recently awarded the 2019 Emerging Leader Fellowship with TYA/USA

and the NYCCT Leader Fellowship for 2019/2020. BA in Theater Arts from the University of Southern California. To learn more about Ms. Davis, check her out at www.khaliadavis.com.

About TYA/USA: Theatre for Young Audiences/USA (TYA/USA) is the leading national organization representing over 1,000 member theatres, organizations, and individual arts professionals across the United States committed to the professional field of theatre for children, young adults, and families. Recently, 1200 professionals from 46 states and 21 countries participated in the 2020 TYA/USA Virtual Festival & Conference. Dedicated to ensuring that all young people have access to high-quality theatre experiences, TYA/USA offers a variety of programming that connects professionals working in the sector through in-person gatherings and virtual sessions; provides opportunities for field-wide learning and leadership development; disseminates field news and research through a variety of print and online channels; and advances the field both internally and externally through a range of advocacy efforts. Founded in 1965, TYA/USA is the only theatre organization in the United States which has the development of professional theatre for young audiences and international exchange as its primary mandates. TYA/USA is the United States Center for the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ). More information can be found at www.tyausa.org.

About Wheelock Family Theatre: Wheelock Family Theatre at Boston University is the greater Boston area's leading professional theatre offering a shared experience for the entire family. Founded in 1981, WFT@BU's long-standing commitment to equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion has garnered recognition and awards at the local and national level. WFT@BU's productions have served more than a half-million audience members and WFT@BU's education programs have provided hands-on training to tens of thousands of students across the state of Massachusetts. On June 1, 2018, Wheelock Family Theatre became a program of Boston University. Founded in 1839, Boston University is an internationally recognized institution of higher education and research. With more than 33,000 students, it is the fourth-largest independent university in the United States. BU consists of 17 schools and colleges, along with a number of multi-disciplinary centers and institutes integral to the University's research and teaching mission. In 2012, BU joined the Association of American Universities (AAU), a consortium of 62 leading research universities in the United States and Canada

About The Gottabees: The Gottabees are a Boston-based ensemble dedicated to creating inspirational, engaging, and empowering theater for family audiences. Headed up by Bonnie Duncan, they are known internationally for uniting simple-but-elegant visual theater with astonishing technique. The Gottabees' mission is to inspire community, connection, and joy by providing an outlet for families to giggle, gasp, sigh, and cheer together. The Gottabees' stories reflect children's everyday aspirations, concerns, and emotional experiences. The Gottabees want children (and adults!) to know in their hearts that they, too, can make theater wherever they are and whomever they are. The Gottabees earned a 2017 UNIMA-USA Citation of Excellence (the highest award in puppetry for North America) and their work is regularly supported by the Jim Henson Foundation. <http://www.thegottabees.com>

About Broadway On Demand: Broadway On Demand is the premiere streaming service offering an extensive and wide-ranging library of video on demand content, exclusive livestream events, interactive platforms, and educational resources. It is designed as a virtual performing arts complex offering not only Broadway shows and movie musicals but also, individual artists, concert series, performance venues, and theatres around the world. Additionally, using a unique licensing interface, approved middle school, high school, and college productions will have the opportunity to be streamed to a global

audience. Broadway On Demand fulfills Broadway's long-held promise of being the 'longest street in the world'.

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