

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## RISING YOUTH THEATRE ANNOUNCES NEW SEASON OF PROGRAMMING

***Phoenix-based youth leadership company continues its work at the intersection of art and social justice with a diverse year of programming and growth.***

**Phoenix, Arizona, September 2022** -- Rising Youth Theatre presents a unique season of programming, creating riveting and relevant theatre experiences with youth and adults in our community. As always, our work is driven by our commitment to using the arts to imagine the world we want to live in, and built in accordance with our core values (outlined here: [risingyouththeatre.org/mission-and-core-values](http://risingyouththeatre.org/mission-and-core-values)).

Productions we're excited about in the 2022-2023 season include:

### *Keysmash: A Conversation About Mental Health*

A “keysmash” according to urban dictionary, is “exactly that, a random smashing of the keyboard that conveys intense or overwhelming emotion that cannot be expressed through words.” And we know that that is what trying to talk about mental health can feel like. For both young people and adults there is a tremendous amount of shame, stigma, and secrecy wrapped around these topics. We often don’t know how to start talking about anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, the things that feel hardest, even when we want and need to. This project both imagines a future where mental health support is naturally embedded into all facets of our lives, and provides immediate resources and help to teens in crisis.

Following a year of development and a successful workshop performance in 2022, *Keysmash: A Conversation about Mental Health* will have a public sharing in December 2022 followed by a tour of both the process and performance to schools across the Phoenix area in 2023. Produced in partnership with Bring Change to Mind and the Laloboy Foundation with support from the New England Foundation for the Arts, Glendale Arts Commission, Scottsdale Arts, Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture, Arizona Humanities, and the Arizona Commission on the Arts.

### *The Arizona Orphan Abduction*

In 1904, forty Irish Catholic orphans were brought to Arizona so they could be placed with Catholic families. These families, like most Catholics in Arizona at the time, were Mexican. White people in the community, enraged at the idea of white children being placed in Mexican homes, formed a vigilante squad to “rescue” them, over the objection of both the children and their adoptive families. This violent mob kidnapped the children, nearly lynching the local nuns and priest in the process. When the Catholic church sued on behalf of the families to get their children back, the courts ruled in favor of the kidnappers. Rising Youth Theatre will use this moment in history as a starting point for an immersive theatre experience and community dialogue, drawing connections between this moment in history and the world we live in now. This project will begin the research phase with a youth and adult artistic team

this year, with a workshop performance in spring 2023. Produced with support from Arizona Humanities, Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture, and the Arizona Commission on the Arts.

### *The Light Rail Plays*

Rising Youth Theatre's signature production, *The Light Rail Plays* will return to live performances after two years performing virtually! Based on the platform at the Tempe Transit Center, this project brings a public art performance to life on and around the Valley Metro Light Rail in February 2023. The project puts young people and adults into direct, one on one partnership and explores the nature of public transit and public art, specifically in our community. Produced in partnership with Valley Metro and the City of Tempe.

### *RAD (Rising Youth Theatre After Dark)*

Rising Youth Theatre defines "youth" up through age 25, knowing that after age 18 the number of resources and supports available to young people are often drastically reduced. For the young people in our staff and ensemble, there has become an increased demand for programming that can directly speak to the transitional moments between youth and adulthood, providing an opportunity to explore more advanced material and building on learning that has happened in previous experiences with the company. RAD, or Rising Youth Theatre After Dark is a new project that focuses on the transition between youth and adulthood, young people ages 18-25. What happens when you're a legal adult but you're still figuring things out? What kind of art do you want to make? What kind of person are you going to be moving forward? How are you going to pay bills? RAD programming will focus on these stories, with opportunities for workshops and performances throughout the year.

We also have programs about social emotional learning and strong student/teacher relationships happening in schools across the Phoenix Metro area including our 7th year at Genesis Academy, and new partnerships with Maurice C. Cash Elementary and Silvestre Herrera Elementary.

Rising Youth Theatre is not a traditionally structured nonprofit - our team of youth and adult leaders work alongside our board of directors to support our work, mission & community. The leadership team includes Producing Artistic Collaborators Thameenah Muhammad, Julio-César Saucedo, Sarah Sullivan, and Xanthia Angel Walker, Transforming Artistic Collaborators Sofía Fenken and Trinity Lugo, and Journeying Artistic Collaborator Raeana Casillas.

Friends of RYT and anyone who would like to learn more about getting involved can join the Rising Youth ensemble at their space in the Phoenix Center for the Arts on Saturday, October 1 from 3:00 - 5:00pm for an open house.

### **About Rising Youth Theatre**

Founded in 2011, Rising Youth Theatre's mission is "To imagine and build the world we want to live in through youth-driven, multigenerational collaboration and justice-centered artistic process and performance that generates reflection, connection and action."

Rising Youth Theatre is a youth leadership organization working at the intersection of art and social justice. We believe that theatre and the arts are powerful tools with which young people can stand up and advocate for themselves and their peers. Artmaking and storytelling are a catalyst for change. Young people work in leadership spaces across all levels of our organization, including the staff, board, and creative spaces. We produce original plays around topics that matter to our community, including, race, mental health, student push-out, and more. Our school residency program brings social-emotional learning through the arts to hundreds of kids each year.

The company works primarily in Arizona's Maricopa County, working with young people and professional adult artists. There is no cost for youth to participate and all performances are presented to the public for free, strengthening access to arts and dialogue across Arizona communities. Rising Youth Theatre believes that change happens when we listen to young people. Through artmaking, we are able to make these spaces, creating opportunities for young people to advocate for themselves and their peers.

#### **For More information**

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