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YOUTH PERFORMANCE COMPANY NAMES NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR UPON RETIREMENT OF FOUNDER JACIE KNIGHT

Award-Winning Creator Maya Washington Returns "Home" to Lead the Organization

SAINT PAUL September 29, 2022 - After a national search, Youth Performance Company (YPC) is thrilled to announce that multidisciplinary creator Maya Washington is taking the helm as the organization's Artistic Director. Founder Jacie Knight, who has been leading the organization since its inception in 1989, has retired to the position of Artistic Director Emeritus. Knight is delighted to be leaving the organization in Washington's capable hands. "Maya grew up at Youth Performance Company. From her first show, *Freedom Riders*, as a teenager, I knew she was something special. Her belief in the arts as a tool for social justice aligns with YPC's mission and operation. I can't wait to see how the organization will evolve with her leadership and inspiration," says Knight.

The Youth Performance Company Board of Directors is especially enthusiastic about hiring a highly successful woman of color and YPC alumna for the leadership position. "I'm very excited about the next chapter of YPC under Maya Washington's leadership. She grew up in the halls of YPC and went on to create magic around the nation. Maya's experience as an artist, her professional accomplishments, and accolades position her to lead YPC to new heights," comments Ron Lattin, YPC Board President.

Maya Washington got her start on Twin Cities stages and is now an award-winning filmmaker, actress, writer, creative director, and arts educator. As a sought after film, television, and commercial director, Washington has a local and national presence in theatre and live events, bringing her skillset to Youth Performance Company and other Twin Cities organizations throughout her professional career.

Washington received a BA in Dramatic Arts from the University of Southern California and an MFA in Creative Writing from Hamline University. Her work has garnered awards from McKnight Foundation, Jerome Foundation, Minnesota State Arts Board, Minnesota Film and Television, and others. Washington is dedicated to multi-disciplinary projects that have

a sense of “purpose” in the world, selecting stories that illuminate some aspect of the human experience that is untold, rarely seen, or might benefit from a new perspective. Her film work has also allowed her projects to have a global reach, including Toronto, Budapest, Hong Kong, Berlin, and Rome.

“I’m delighted and humbled to return to my first theatre ‘home’ in the Twin Cities. Jacie Knight always strived to acknowledge the light in everyone and encouraged us to let our inner lights ‘shine’ as young people. Those early affirmations of my personhood and my gifts as an artist are only a few examples of the love and care that she also poured over my professional career as an adult, making this a full-circle moment for me.”

After more than 30 years, this leadership transition is significant. "We are grateful to Founder Jacie Knight for her leadership at YPC. She has touched the lives of so many in the Twin Cities' theatre community and beyond. Her most lasting legacy is the impact she has made with the thousands of young people in our community who are living more full and satisfying lives thanks to their time at YPC with Jacie. There is no doubt that her mentorship changed the trajectory of many young lives over the years. Our entire community is stronger thanks to the efforts and presence of YPC and Jacie Knight," commented Lattin.

Washington’s first season, the final curatorial offering of shows hand-selected by Knight, is kicking off with a production of *The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical* by Joe Tracz, music and lyrics by Rob Rokicki, adapted from the beloved book “The Lightning Thief” by Rick Riordan directed by Dough Neithercott. The story follows the half-blood son of a Greek god Percy Jackson who has newly-discovered powers he can’t control, a destiny he doesn’t want, and a mythology textbook’s worth of monsters on his trail. The production runs Friday, October 14-October 30, 2022 at the Conn Theatre, 1900 Nicollet Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55403, free parking. Tickets (\$8-\$15) are on sale now at youthperformanceco.org

For more information visit: youthperformanceco.org

ABOUT YOUTH PERFORMANCE COMPANY

Founded in 1989 by Jacie Knight, Youth Performance Company a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in Minnesota, empowers youth and inspires social change through bold theatre and media arts. Families from all over the Twin Cities have come to rely on the fresh and exciting mainstage shows that are produced each season by YPC. Youth have gone on to careers in the performing arts, theatre, film, television, business, and even serve as elected officials. Their impact spreads throughout the Twin Cities, the State of Minnesota, the United States, and around the world.

Performance Details:

***The Lightning Thief*
*The Percy Jackson Musical***

Book by Joe Tracz, Music & Lyrics by Rob Rokicki
Adapted from the book *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan

As the half-blood son of a Greek god, Percy Jackson has newly-discovered powers he can't control, a destiny he doesn't want, and a mythology textbook's worth of monsters on his trail. When Zeus's master lightning bolt is stolen and Percy becomes the prime suspect, he has to find and return the bolt to prove his innocence and prevent a war between the gods.

Tickets:

General Admission \$15
Groups of 10 or more \$8-\$12

[General admission](#) and [Group](#) reservations available at www.youthperformanceco.org

Fri, Oct 14 7:30pm

Sat, Oct 15 7:30pm

Sun, Oct 16 2:00pm

Fri, Oct 21 7:30pm

Sat, Oct 22 7:30pm

Sun, Oct 23 2:00pm

Fri, Oct 28 11:00am, 7:30pm

Sat, Oct 29 7:30pm

Sun, Oct 30 2:00pm (ASL interpreted)

* Masks are required for all audience members.

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