

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ZIMBABWE-INSPIRED FOLKTALE COMES TO LIFE FOR 40th ANNIVERSARY SEASON AT DCT

(DALLAS, TX) – Dallas Children's Theater (DCT) is excited to announce the opening of its 2023-2024 season with John Steptoe's 1987 classic, *MUFARO'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS: AN AFRICAN TALE*. This beautiful Zimbabwe-based Cinderella story transforms the DCT stage into an enchanted African village, marking the beginning of the organization's 40th anniversary season, the first since the retirement of the theater's beloved founder, Robyn Flatt, who will be serving as the show's co-director.

From September 24 – October 14, 2023, the show will play at Dallas Children's Theater's Rosewood Center for Family Arts, celebrating goodness, generosity, and love with traditional dancing, rhythmic drumming, and glorious African song composed by musical powerhouse and show co-director, S-Ankh Rasa. With a message that will start meaningful conversations about kindness and staying true to oneself, John Steptoe's *MUFARO'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS: AN AFRICAN TALE* tells the story of an African villager named Mufaro who has two daughters whom everyone agrees are beautiful. However, his daughters, Manyara and Nyasha, have their differences. Manyara possesses a bad temper and is self-centered (but never in front of Mufaro), while Nyasha is kind and considerate to people and animals. When Mufaro learns that the King is meeting all the most worthy and beautiful women to choose a wife, he decides that both daughters should go. The King sets up tests of character for each daughter to encounter along the way in this story about the strength and grace found only through true inner beauty.

This season's opener pays tribute to Robyn Flatt, who co-founded Dallas Children's Theater in 1984, creating what today has become a venue for collaboration with local artists, designers, playwrights, and educators, producing enriching and educational plays within the Vickery Meadow community. As a director, Robyn has tried to capture the mystery of nature and the deep cultural connection to spirits that are part of African culture. While several cultural customs are part of the story, the message is clear for young audiences from all backgrounds. "John Steptoe's *MUFARO'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS: AN AFRICAN TALE* is one of my top favorites because of the sensitive, poetic way it promotes kindness to others, the creatures around us, and nature itself. Its exuberant celebration of goodness triumphing over darkness sends the audience away with love, laughter, and smiles. The universal essence of the key message provides us with a substantial model for creating our own joyous, supportive environments," says Flatt. Encompassing the true magic of children's theater, John Steptoe's *MUFARO'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS: AN AFRICAN TALE* is based on the 1988 Caldecott Honor Award book, an honor given annually to the most distinguished American picture book for children.

John Steptoe's *MUFARO'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS: AN AFRICAN TALE* returns to the stage, last playing as a national touring production during the 2016-2017 season. Actors Rick Spivey, Ivan Jones, and Gerald Taylor will reprise their roles this season with Charli Armstrong,

previously playing Manyara, rejoining the cast as kind-hearted Nyasha. Speaking on its popularity, Flatt says, "I think DCT's production of this play has captivated audiences across the country for such a long time because of its clarity of story, its wealth of vibrant music, and its dynamic African dances, which bind together to invite us to share the best of ourselves, beyond our cultures, into all our circles of influence. No matter where we come from, we all seek beauty, love, and family. This story is good for all people and will linger in the audience's memory."

Tickets for John Steptoe's MUFARO'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS: AN AFRICAN TALE are available only from Dallas Children's Theater. General tickets are available online at www.dct.org/plays.

John Steptoe's

MUFARO'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS: AN AFRICAN TALE

Adapted for the stage by Karen Abbott

Music and Lyrics by S-Ankh Rasa

Directed by S-Ankh Rasa and Robyn Flatt

Recommended for ages five and up

Cast

Storyteller/Messenger – Rick Spivey*

Villager 1/Laughing Tree/King – Gerald Taylor*

Villager 2/ Laughing Tree/ Old Woman/ Snake Puppeteer – Monica Palmer*

Mufaro / Dance Captain – Ivan Jones*

Manyara – Myiesha J. Duff*

Nyasha – Charli Armstrong*

Female Understudy / Hungry Boy / Old Woman / Villager Ensemble – Ania Lyons

Male Understudy / Villager Ensemble – Octavian Lewis

Production Team

Co-Director – Robyn Flatt

Co-Director/Musical Director – S-Ankh Rasa

Choreographer – Michelle Gibson

Producer/Properties Designer – Sally Fiorello

Scenic Designer – Kristina Ortiz Miller

Lighting Designer – Linda Blase

Sound Designer – Marco Salinas & Brian Christensen

Costume Designer – Glory Sprinkle

Stage Manager – Dwight Sandell*

*Denotes member of Actors Equity Association

Performance Dates and Times

- Sunday, September 24, 1:30 PM – Public Opening
- Saturday, September 30, 1:30 PM (Sensory-Friendly Performance)
- Sunday, October 1, 1:30 PM (ASL Performance)
- Saturday, October 7, 4:30 PM
- Sunday, October 8, 4:30 PM
- Saturday, October 14, 1:30 PM – Public Closing

Ticket Prices: Thanks to a donation from The M.R. & Evelyn Hudson Foundation, as a gift to the community and in honor of Robyn Flatt, all Public Weekend Performance tickets are \$5 per person. Phone reservations are required for Sensory-Friendly performances. Call the Box Office for details at 214-740-0051.

Weekday Student Matinee shows are also available Tuesdays through Fridays. Call Dallas Children's Theater at 214-978-0120 or visit www.dct.org/fieldtrips.

2023-2024 Season Sponsors are: Texas Instruments, City of Dallas Office of Arts and Culture, March Family Foundation, The Carlson Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, The M.R. & Evelyn Hudson Foundation, The Theodore and Beulah Beasley Foundation, Inc., The Rosewood Corporation, The Melinda and Jim Johnson Family. General Sponsors Include: The Hearst Foundations, The Holloway Family Foundation, Sharron Hunt, Lara and Stephen Harrison, TACA, Carl B. & Florence E. King Foundation, TXU Energy, The Rocky Howard Family, Texas Travel Industry Recovery Program. Additional Support is Provided By: Dallas Tourism Public Improvement District, Capital for Kids, Joan Becker, Texas Commission on the Arts and National Endowment for the Arts, Stephen M. Seay Foundation, Margot B. Perot, The Eugene McDermott Foundation, Ellen and Jim Markus, Central Market, Laurie Sands Harrison, Lisa K. Simmons, Green Mountain Energy DCT's official renewable energy partner. Sensory-Friendly Sponsors Include: Fichtenbaum Charitable Trust. Building Fund Supported By: The Carlson Foundation, The March Family Foundation, Laurie Sands Harrison, The Rosewood Corporation, Anonymous Family, Elizabeth & Bart Showalter, Karen & Ken Travis, The Hersh Foundation, Everett & Becky Spaeth.

Dallas Children's Theater
Rosewood Center for Family Arts
5938 Skillman Street
Dallas, Texas 75231

About Dallas Children's Theater

Dallas Children's Theater features professional actors performing for an annual audience of 150,000 young people and their families through mainstage productions and an arts-in-education program. As the only major organization in Dallas focusing solely on youth and family theater, DCT builds bridges of understanding between generations and cultures, instilling an early appreciation of literature, art, and the performing arts in tomorrow's artists and patrons.

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