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For immediate release

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Pillsbury House Theatre presents
Chicago Avenue Project: Elvis Has Left the Building
starring neighborhood kids and Twin Cities artists
April 20 & 21, 2015

Minneapolis, MN – Now in its 20th year, Pillsbury House Theatre’s award-winning Chicago Avenue Project returns on April 20 and 21. *Elvis Has Left the Building* features nine original, short plays written and directed by Twin Cities theatre artists, and performed by South Minneapolis youth alongside professional actors, including Ivey Award-winning **Carolyn Pool**; 2014 Late Nite Series artist **Brianne A. Hill**; **Zach Curtis**, who was recently seen in Torch Theater’s *Boeing Boeing*; and Brave New Workshop regular **Taj Ruler**.

For each round of the Chicago Avenue Project, a theme is chosen based on a phrase or idiom, which is then incorporated into the script of every play. This year’s theme, “Elvis Has Left the Building,” was selected by the students. Although, not all of the kids knew who Elvis was until the first meeting.

This spring’s lineup includes plays about a skateboarder with a passion for hospitality management, a zombie’s first swimming lesson, and a young pickpocket who outsmarts the National Pickpocketing Champion.

Chicago Avenue Project partners each kid with a team of three adult volunteers: a playwright, a director, and an actor. The playwright writes a short play specifically for the kid, and then the kid rehearses the play with her/his director and adult actor over the course of the next month. The experience culminates in three public performances.

In addition to the performances, Chicago Avenue Project youth also help to develop the show’s publicity materials and decorate the props. A few of the students work alongside our Production Manager and learn how to use the light and sound board for the show.

The team of adult theatre artists also includes playwrights: **Steve Moulds, Eliza Rasheed, Josef Evans, Jessica Huang, Harrison Rivers, A. Austin, Indira Addington, and Basil Kreimendahl**; directors **Christopher Stroschein, Molly Van Avery, Blayn Lemke, Stacy Shultz, Julia Lawler, Joy Dolo, Patty Hall, Jess Finney, and Adam Gauger**; as well as actors **Alsa Bruno, Katie Langemo, Sam Pearson, Rachel Austin, and Kory LaQuess Pullman**. Production credits include costumes designed by **Stephanie Molstad**; lights by **Mike Wangen**; sound by **Anton Jones**; props by **Michael Folliard-Olson**; and projection art by **Patricia Savanick Anderson**.

Elvis Has Left the Building will premiere at Pillsbury House Theatre, 3501 Chicago Avenue South, Minneapolis, on **Monday, April 20 at 7:00 pm** and **Tuesday, April 21 at 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm**. All performances are free and open to the public. No reservations are necessary.

About the Chicago Avenue Project

Since 1996, the Chicago Avenue Project brings together the Twin Cities best adult playwrights, actors, and directors who volunteer to work one-on-one with neighborhood youth on the creation and production of an original play. Individual children develop close mentoring relationships with at least three adults who are successful in their creative fields while adult professional artists share the chance to perform in wildly imaginative plays as talking guinea pigs, horses, computer gaming systems, and other indescribably unique characters.

The Chicago Avenue Project gives every child—regardless of their circumstances—the opportunity to discover that he or she has a lot of value to offer. The project is not about teaching youth to perform, though they do learn acting, nor is it about teaching them how to write plays, though they learn that as well.

About Pillsbury House Theatre

From the Mainstage series to Chicago Avenue Project and Naked Stages to the Power of Our Voices teen ensemble, **PILLSBURY HOUSE THEATRE** brings audiences closer—to the edge, to the actors, to affordable, adventurous theatre, to fellow audience members, and to a strong community. Now in its 24th season, Pillsbury House Theatre is proud to be a professional theatre unlike any other. In partnership with Pillsbury United Communities, one of the largest human services organizations in the state, Pillsbury House Theatre demonstrates that the highest quality art is an integral part of all healthy communities, winning awards for theatre across the metro while also inspiring choice, change, and connection through raw, intimate drama. pillsburyhousetheatre.org

CALENDAR EDITORS:

CHICAGO AVENUE PROJECT: *Elvis Has Left the Building*

April 20 at 7:00 p.m.

April 21 at 4:00 p.m.

April 21 at 7:00 p.m.

Pillsbury House Theatre
3501 Chicago Avenue S.
Minneapolis, MN 55407

General admission is free. All ages are welcome.

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