



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TOWN HALL THEATRE ANNOUNCES STAGED READING FOR THE NEXT NEW VOICES SERIES

June 13th, 2023 – An original piece written by San Francisco based playwright Christian Wilburn, “*Starlight*” will have a one night only staged reading on Saturday, July 8th 2023.

A rare autoimmune disorder has forced Sasha to live most of her life in books, and in dreams. However, when a mysterious book called *Starlight* brings her dreams to life, and potentially gives her a destiny, reality and dreams blend into a story that explores the transcendent mystery of chronic illness.

“*Starlight* was inspired by the desire to explain the feeling of chronic illness to someone who didn’t understand it.” shared playwright **Christian Wilburn**. “It’s an allegory for how it feels to have an illness that no one understands, and the magic that comes with persevering anyway.”

“If you are a lover of fantasy or adventure novels, *Starlight* is for you.” remarked director **Claire Ganem**. “Wilburn takes a well loved genre and places a new heroine at the forefront- a teenager named Sasha, who is battling an unclassified chronic illness. I love how this story packs in a lot of heart, a lot of love, and a lot of humor while exploring the complex experience of what it is to live with a disability in an unaccommodating world.”

The New Voices series is a first for Town Hall Theatre. The series was created to give a wider-array of playwrights a chance to expose new and in-process works to an audience that may not otherwise be exposed to their stories. Productions in the series will include a facilitated talkback allowing the playwrights the chance to receive feedback from audiences in a constructive manner, while also giving audiences an insight into the theatre maker’s process.

COVID PRECAUTIONS

-MASKS ARE NO LONGER REQUIRED AND ARE NOW OPTIONAL

-PROOF OF VACCINATION IS NO LONGER REQUIRED

To view our COVID 19 Policy in detail, please visit our website at <https://www.townhalltheatre.com/covid19>.

-TESTING THEATRE ARTISTS

Testing protocols will be adjusted to meet the comfort of casts and availability of testing. Each cast and production team will be asked what testing protocols they are comfortable with. We pledge to establish and adhere to the protocols for each production that offer the most comfort to performers.

- A limited amount of rapid tests may be provided by Town Hall Theatre if they feel it is prudent and appropriate.
- If it is agreed to in advance Town Hall Theatre will reimburse anyone working on a project at Town Hall for the cost of purchasing a PCR or rapid test.

CONTENT ADVISORY FOR THIS PRODUCTION

"*Starlight*" contains themes of trauma in the medical system and themes of a child in fantastical peril.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Christian Wilburn (he/him) is a San Francisco based writer, actor and educator, who's writing blends the deeply personal and the fantastical. His work has been featured in the Playground New Works Festival, the PCSF BIPOC Expressions Showcase, Fade to Black Festival, and Monday Night Playground. His full-length play *Starlight* just received a developmental production at the Playground New Works Festival. Christian received his MFA in Writing from the University of San Francisco, and a BA in Theatre Arts from Santa Clara University.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Claire Ganem (she/her) is a director and educator, who has a passion for developing new works. She is a current company member and ambassador at Playground SF. In addition to Playground, her work has been featured at Cutting Ball Theatre, Pianofight, 3Girls Theatre, Town Hall Theatre, Santa Cruz Shakespeare, and Magic Theatre, where she was an artistic direction apprentice during their 2018-2019 season. She is excited to direct for *Queerstory* at Left Coast Theatre Company this summer. In her spare time, Claire enjoys teaching her students at UC Santa Cruz and baking extravagant cakes for her loved ones.

ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER PRODUCER

Lisa Anne Morrison (she/ her) made her way back home to the Bay Area after working professionally as an actor in Los Angeles for many years. She is a CalArts graduate who found her love of new plays while producing and acting as a member of L.A.'s Theatre of NOTE. Some favorite Bay Area acting credits are "All's Well that Ends Well," "Othello" (Cal Shakes), "Intimate Apparel," "Shakespeare in Hollywood" (TheatreWorks). She was last seen in Netflix' "13 Reasons Why." Lisa is a long-time teaching artist with CoachArt, a non-profit that pairs artists and athletes with chronically ill children and produced the Bay Area edition of the annual Coach Art Fundraising Gala where close to \$1 million was raised in a single evening. Lisa serves as the DEIB chair for Stanley Middle School and is on the district DEIB committee. The New Voices series is an exciting way to combine Lisa's passion for theatre and promoting diversity in our community.

ABOUT THE NEW VOICES SERIES

In an effort to use Town Hall's platform to raise up local artists, they have created the New Voices series starting in the 2021-2022 season. This is a series of small-scale productions that feature local playwrights whose unproduced work is still in the final steps of the workshopping phase. This offers playwrights the chance to get structured audience feedback and hear their work aloud. For Town Hall's audiences it's a chance to be exposed to new local artists. The primary focus of this program is to benefit local playwrights, especially those who belong to traditionally under-represented and under-produced groups.

ABOUT TOWN HALL THEATRE

Established in 1944 as the Dramateurs, Town Hall Theatre Company is the oldest continuously active theatre in Contra Costa County. Town Hall Theatre (THT) was awarded Best Theatre Troupe 2016 by Diablo Magazine, Best of The East Bay, and is the past recipient of numerous Shellie Awards, and Theatre Bay Area Awards. THT is also home to an extensive children's educational program, twice voted the Best Children's Theatre Company by Bay Area Parent Magazine. THT's home is the historic Town Hall Theatre building located at 3535 School Street in Lafayette which is owned by the Lafayette Improvement Association (LIA).

CALENDAR Information for “*Starlight*”

WHO: Town Hall Theatre Company

WHAT: Staged Reading “*Starlight*” by Christian Wilburn

CAST: TBD

DATES: Saturday, July 8th 2023 at 8:00pm

WHERE: Town Hall Theatre Co (3535 School Street, Lafayette)

TICKETS: \$15. Pay-What-You-Can tickets will be available at the door. <https://www.townhalltheatre.com/starlight>

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