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## **Bricolage premieres new immersive production built for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families.**

Commissioned by EQT Children's Theater Festival, *Welcome to Here* debuts May 12 -15

PITTSBURGH, PA (April 12, 2016) — On the heels of their critically acclaimed *SAINTS TOUR*, Bricolage debuts their latest immersive endeavor, *Welcome to Here*, a production designed to welcome children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and their families. Commissioned for the EQT Children's Theater Festival in May, this sensory-sensitive production takes the form of a personal quest into a land full of whimsical characters and enchanted terrain.

Autism Spectrum Disorder affects around 1 in 68 children in the U.S. and can manifest as sensory sensitivities, difficulties with attention, social interaction, motor coordination, and repetitive behaviors. With these symptoms, traditional theater staples such as bright lights, heavy sound and sudden or unexpected movements on stage become particularly problematic. Recent efforts have been made by theaters across the country to welcome patrons with cognitive disorders such as ASD by adapting existing productions to make them “sensory-friendly,” also referred to as “autism friendly” or “relaxed performances.” These performances often employ reductions in light and sound and feature designated quiet areas in the lobby for those who need a break from the stimulating environment of a theatrical performance.

While the overwhelming majority of “sensory-friendly” performances adapt a preexisting production, Bricolage built *Welcome to Here* from its inception, specifically for the ASD community. “We want to create a theater piece that is not limited by accommodations of children with ASD but instead embraces them to result in a unique and immersive adventure where the challenges of this population are turned into strengths, and the show could not go on without them,” explains Jackie Baker, the show's Assistant Director.

In order to create a piece that would truly resonate with the ASD community, Bricolage worked alongside the Autism Community including Arts for Autism's Carolyn Hare and Rebecca Covert from Firefly Arts. Bricolage also sought out and cast Vanya Rumsey, a 17 year old Autistic self-advocate who helped influence the direction, themes and development of the show based on her own experiences with Autism. “Working on this

production has been an incredible opportunity for me to share my knowledge and advocate for my community,” says Vanya. “There isn't often a chance to articulate my everyday experiences as Autistic and use that knowledge to help create something specifically designed to accommodate for the needs of my community. Taking this opportunity has been an amazing experience for me, and I am very excited to be a part of an inclusive performance such as this.”

Tami Dixon, the show’s writer/director affirms, “The addition of Vanya to the cast was a powerful turning point in the trajectory of this process. Her ability to articulate how Autism affects her daily life revealed how exclusive traditional theatre practices can be, which has been incredibly influential and beneficial to the development of this piece.”

*Welcome to Here* is generously supported by The Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust, The Fine Foundation, The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust and Arts for Autism Foundation.

### **WELCOME TO HERE CAST AND CREW:**

**Performers/Devisors:** David Bielewicz, Vanya Rumsey, Siovhan Christensen, Missy Moreno, Parag S. Gohel, Gayle Pazerski

**Director/Writer:** Tami Dixon

**Assistant Director:** Jackie Baker

**Costume Designer:** Madison Hack

**Scenic Designer:** Stephanie Mayer-Staley

**Sound Design Team:** Sarah Pickett, Chris Evans and David Gotwald

**Lighting Designer:** Michael J. Papinchak III

**Technical Director:** Duane Alan

**Dramaturg:** Stephanie Kane

**Stage Manager:** Ryan Looke

### **BOX OFFICE:**

412-456-6666 or [www.TrustArts.org/PGHKIDS](http://www.TrustArts.org/PGHKIDS)

### **ACCESSIBILITY:**

Bricolage’s production *Welcome to Here* is mindful about sensory sensitivities. There are no loud noises, bright lights, or abrupt surprises. If your child is ever feeling over-stimulated, a comfort zone is available at all times. Bricolage’s space at 937 Liberty Avenue is designed for wheelchair access and features accessible restrooms. Bricolage is committed to providing an environment that is inclusive and welcoming to all patrons. They encourage patrons to identify any specific accommodations that would make their experience more enjoyable, or any other requests in the comments section when purchasing tickets or by calling or texting their offices at 412.471.0999.

### **BRICOLAGE MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT:**

Bricolage envisions theater not as a passive experience, but as a vehicle for heightened involvement for artist and audience alike. By combining different artistic mediums, nourishing local talent, producing provocative work, and facilitating audience engagement, Bricolage seeks to revitalize live performance for a new era.

The word Bricolage means “making artful use of what is at hand.” What excites this company is the connection and interaction between seemingly disparate elements, and the potential for these components to resonate as one cohesive event. "What’s at hand" is Pittsburgh's

changing landscape, its plentiful human and material resources, and the salient political, cultural, and ethical issues they encounter and react to each day.

Their approach encourages artists to take the creative risks necessary to create full-blooded, high-quality theatrical experiences that challenge audiences to engage in new ways, react, and express openly their opinions about our work – to have a stake in the creative discussion.

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