



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bestselling children's book
LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET
comes to life in magical First Stage production

-Featuring colorful sets, imaginative costumes and original music-

Milwaukee, WI – April 28, 2022 – The final First Stage production of the 2021/22 season will be **LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET**, a play adapted by **Gloria Bond Clunie** from the Newbery Medal-winning children's book by **Matt de la Peña**, with Illustrations by **Christian Robinson**. Directed by **Johamy Morales**, this production is part of First Stage's First Steps Series which introduces younger audiences to live theater. The play is set on a Sunday morning. CJ and his Nana set out in the rain on their weekly bus ride across town. Along the way, CJ wonders why they don't own a car, or headphones or an iPad like his friends. Most of all he wishes they didn't have to journey to the scary last stop on Market Street. Their trip through the bustling city becomes an exciting magical adventure which helps CJ solve a mysterious riddle and make unexpected special friends as he discovers a wonderful new way to see the world! Sponsored by **PNC**. *Performance run time is approximately 55 minutes, with no intermission. Suggested for families with young people ages 3 – 7+.*

LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET runs **May 7 – June 12, 2022** at the newly-renovated Goodman Mainstage Hall at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, located at 325 W. Walnut Street in downtown Milwaukee. Tickets are \$15. Tickets are available online at firststage.org or through the First Stage Box Office at (414) 267-2961.

Director **Johamy Morales** had these thoughts to share about the play: *"The gift of kindness comes with a triple rainbow magic!"* Our young people have experienced a very difficult year of isolation and have been quickly exposed to socialization in a world full of uncertainty. Children are having to readapt as they engage with one another, while others have been robbed from learning those fundamental social skills that instill kindness. How do we teach our young people

to live in a more kind and understanding world? How do we continue engaging their imagination as they have been conditioned to screens? How do we empower their curiosity in an imperfect world? The answer lies in the individual and how we decide to show up in the world. Our words and actions have consequences, and young people look to us to learn how “to really see” the world around them. This story takes place in an imperfect world as CJ marvels at his grandmother’s ability to find beauty in an imperfect world. “*Sometimes when you are surrounded by dirt CJ, you’re a better witness for what’s beautiful.*”

“LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET takes place on a summer present day as CJ and his grandmother go on their Sunday routine as they inhabit a variety of environments. They ride the bus from the East side to the West side of the city. As CJ becomes curious he embarks on a magical self-discovery through the act of kindness. Through this production my intent is to honor the wonder of young people’s imagination and bring to life the words of the playwright with delight, wonder and curiosity. The world of the play starts us off in reality and then evolves into rainbow magic through the vehicle of CJ’s imagination. It is important we bring the audience into CJ’s reality and slowly transport them into the magical world.”

Added First Stage Artistic Director **Jeff Frank**, “Author Matt de la Peña has quickly become one of the best and most popular writers for young people – and it makes sense. He paints a vibrant picture of the world around him. Throughout this story CJ begins to see the beauty all around him – and in so doing reveals it to us as well. I love his relationship with his Nana and how she gently imparts her wisdom to young CJ.”

BIOGRAPHIES

Matt de la Peña (Author) is the *New York Times* bestselling, Newbery Medal-winning author of seven young adult novels (including *Mexican WhiteBoy*, *We Were Here* and *Superman: Dawnbreaker*) and six picture books (including *Milo Imagines the World* and *Last Stop on Market Street*). In 2016 he was awarded the NCTE Intellectual Freedom Award. Matt received his MFA in creative writing from San Diego State University and his BA from the University of the Pacific where he attended school on a full basketball scholarship. In 2019 Matt was given an honorary doctorate from UOP. de la Peña currently lives in Southern California. He teaches creative writing and visits schools and colleges throughout the country.

Christian Robinson (Illustrator) is an illustrator, author, animator and designer based in Oakland, California. He was born in Los Angeles and grew up in a small one-bedroom apartment with his brother, two cousins, aunt and grandmother. Drawing became a way to make space for himself and to create the kind of world he wanted to see. He studied animation at the California Institute of the Arts and would later work with the Sesame Workshop and Pixar Animation Studios before becoming an illustrator of books for children. The Christian Robinson for Target collection, released in August 2021, includes more than 70 items across home and apparel for kids and baby. His books include the #1 *New York Times* bestseller *Last Stop on Market Street*, written by Matt de la Peña, which was awarded a Caldecott Honor, a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor and the Newbery Medal, and the #1 *New York Times* bestseller *The*

Bench, written by Meghan, The Duchess of Sussex. His solo projects include *Another*, which was named a *New York Times* Best Illustrated Book of 2019, and the *New York Times* bestseller *You Matter*. His latest collaboration with Matt de la Peña, *Milo Imagines The World*, received six starred reviews and was a #1 Indie Bestseller and a *New York Times* bestseller.

Gloria Bond Clunie (Adapter) is an award-winning playwright, director and educator. Ms. Clunie is a founding member of the Playwriting Ensemble at Chicago's Regional Tony Award-winning Victory Gardens Theater where her plays NORTH STAR, LIVING GREEN and SHOES premiered. She is also the founding Artistic Director of Evanston's Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre where she directed scores of productions including AIN'T MISBEHAVIN', CEREMONIES IN DARK OLD MEN, HOME and RAISIN. Her plays have been produced and workshopped in a variety of theaters including Victory Gardens Theater, Goodman Theatre, Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre, ETA, Alliance Theatre, Triad Stage, Her Story Theatre, MPAACT and Chicago Children's Theatre, among others. A Northwestern graduate (BA Theater, MFA-Directing) she is honored her drama SHOES was included in the 2015 Women Playwrights International Conference in Cape Town, South Africa. In January 2018, she served as both playwright and director for MY WONDERFUL BIRTHDAY SUIT commissioned by Chicago Children's Theatre, while her adaptation of THE LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET (2016 Caldecott/2016 Newbery/2016 Coretta Scott King Book Awards) premiered in November at Children's Theatre of Charlotte and was part of the 2019/20 seasons at both Dallas Children's Theatre and Bay Area Children's Theatre. Currently, she is working on the musical SKY, begun at California's Djerassi Resident Artists Program and inspired by her love of Chicago architecture. She and her husband, Basil, live in Evanston, Illinois and are the proud parents of daughter Aurelia.

Johamy Morales (Director) (she/her) has over 18 years of experience in education, directing, community engagement, new work development and working in the performing arts. Johamy currently serves as the Director of Education at Seattle Children's Theatre (SCT) and as a Trustee for Theatre Communication Group (TCG). Last season she directed the streaming production of COPPER HORNS IN WATER at First Stage. In addition, she has served as an advisory council for the Colorado Creative Industries, Reimagine: New Plays in TYA, TCG's Rising Leaders of Color and TCG's Education Conference. Prior to working with SCT, Johamy served as the Education Director for Creede Repertory Theatre in Creede, Colorado and directed the Comparative Arts Department and the Junior Musical Theatre Program at Interlochen Center for the Arts in Interlochen, Michigan. Johamy has worked with Arena Stage and La Jolla Playhouse through their education programs as a teaching artist. Johamy is an alumnus of the Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship at Arena Stage and the British American Drama Academy in Oxford, England, where she studied Contemporary & Classical works. In February of 2017, Johamy collaborated with the US State Department, the US Embassy & Consulate and several NGOs to promote awareness of domestic and gender violence in Kolkata and Ranchi, India. As an educator, artist and director Johamy has worked with various schools and nonprofit organizations both nationally and internationally including Theatre for Young Audiences/USA, American Alliance for Education & Theatre, Write Now: TYA New Work Festival by Child's Play, First Stage, Hope College, Fort Lewis College, University of San Diego, Esperanza Charter School, Wexner Center, Dennis Museum, Students in Transition Empowerment Program and Columbus

Refugee & Immigration Services. Johamy Morales holds an MFA in acting from The Ohio State University, with a specialization in outreach and devising new work, and a BA in Theatre from San Diego State University.

Jeff Frank (Artistic Director) is recognized as one of the top directors in the field with an expertise in developing new work for the theater for young audience field. He holds a BFA in Theater from the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater, and an MFA in Child Drama from the University of Utah. Having served as First Stage’s Education and Academy Director from 1996 – 2003, Jeff remains committed to the power of theater to transform lives and forever thankful to call First Stage home.

ADULT CAST

Allie Babich, Member of Actors’ Equity Association, (Guitar Lady/Ensemble); **Samantha D. Montgomery**, Member of Actors’ Equity Association, (Nana); **Allen D. Edge**, Member of Actors’ Equity Association, (Reverend/Mr. Dennis/Blind Man/Ensemble); **Selena Deer** (Butterfly Lady/Ensemble); **Amber Weissert** (Understudy for Allie Babich and Selena Deer); **Raymond Jackson** (Understudy for Allen D. Edge) and **Brandite Reed** (Understudy for Samantha D. Montgomery).

YOUNG PERFORMER CASTS

Young Performer roles are double cast. Young Performers in the Bubbles Cast include: **Christian Berman** (Menomonee Falls) as CJ; **Maya Thomure** (Whitefish Bay) as Trixie/Ensemble; **Charli Clevert** (Glendale) as Well-Dressed Young Woman/Ensemble and **Thomas Bastardo** (Saint Francis) as Mumford/Ensemble.

Young Performers in the Rain Cast include: **Madison Jones** (West Allis) as CJ; **Molly McVey** (Bayside) as Trixie/Ensemble; **Alexa Crump** (Wauwatosa) as Well-Dressed Young Woman/Ensemble and **John Daniels** (Mequon) as Mumford/Ensemble.

The Artistic Staff for THE LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET includes: **Johamy Morales** (Director); **Arnold Bueso** (Scenic and Lighting Designer); **Natalie Mayo** (Sound Designer); **Postell Pringle** (Composer); **Jazmin Aurora Medina** (Costume Designer); **Melissa L. Wanke**, Member of Actors’ Equity Association, (Stage Manager), **Emily Marie Wilke** (Rehearsal Assistant Stage Manager), and **Issac Hooper** (Show Assistant Stage Manager).

Tickets are \$15 – Tickets may be purchased at firststage.org/or by phone (414) 267-2961.

Special events for LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET

Pay What You Choose Performance: Sunday, May 15, 2022 at 2 p.m.

Pay What You Choose tickets are available on a first come, first served basis with a minimum suggested donation of \$5 per person. Doors open at 1:00 p.m. on the day of the performance.

Patrons are encouraged to arrive early. firststage.org/events-tickets/tickets-offers/pay-what-you-choose/

Sensory Friendly Performance: Sunday, May 22, 2022 at 2 p.m.

A Sensory Friendly Performance with accommodations for families with children on the autism spectrum will take place on **Sunday, May 22, 2022 at 2 p.m.** Sensory accommodations include lower sound, house lights up, a quiet area staffed by an educator experienced with the care of students on the autism spectrum and other developmental differences, and more. Tickets for Sensory Friendly Performances are \$10. Order by phone at **(414) 267-2961**, weekdays 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. to reserve tickets. To learn more visit: firststage.org/plan-your-visit/sensory-friendly-performances/.

ASL Interpreted Performance: Sunday, June 12, 2022 at 2 p.m.

This performance will be sign language interpreted for patrons who are deaf or hard of hearing. Assistive listening devices are also available at the Todd Wehr Theater.

firststage.org/plan-your-visit/accessibility/sign-language-interpreted-performances/

COVID Protocols: First Stage COVID safety protocols and updates can be viewed here: [firststage.org/plan-your-visit/safety-security/ - performances](https://firststage.org/plan-your-visit/safety-security/-performances)

FACT SHEET

What: First Stage presents LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET

LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET

Winner of the 2016 Newbery Medal

By **Matt de la Peña**, Illustrations by **Christian Robinson**

Adapted by **Gloria Bond Clunie**

Directed by **Johamy Morales**

Sponsored by **PNC**

Location: The Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, 325 W. Walnut Street, Milwaukee

Dates: **May 7 – June 12, 2022**

Description: One Sunday morning, CJ and his Nana set out in the rain on their weekly bus ride across town. Along the way, CJ wonders why they don't own a car, or headphones or an iPad like his friends. Most of all he wishes they didn't have to journey to the scary last stop on Market Street. Their trip through the bustling city becomes an exciting magical adventure which helps CJ solve a mysterious riddle and make unexpected special friends as he discovers a

wonderful new way to see the world! *Performance run time is approximately 55 minutes with no intermission. Suggested for families with young people ages 3-7+.*

Performances:

- Saturday, May 7 at 11:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.
- Sunday, May 8 at 11:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.
- Saturday, May 14 at 11:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.
- Sunday, May 15 at 11:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m. (*PAY WHAT YOU CHOOSE PERFORMANCE AT 2:00 P.M.*)
- Saturday, May 21 at 11:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.
- Sunday, May 22 at 11:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m. (*SENSORY FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE AT 2:00 P.M.*)
- Saturday, Jun 4 at 11:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.
- Sunday, June 5 at 11:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.
- Saturday, June 11 at 11:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.
- Sunday, June 12 at 11:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m. (*ASL PERFORMANCE AT 2:00 P.M.*)

Ticket and information: Tickets are \$15. Call (414) 267-2961 or online at: firststage.org

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About First Stage

First Stage is one of the nation's leading theaters for young people and families. First Stage touches hearts, engages minds and transforms lives by creating extraordinary theater experiences through professional theater productions that inspire, enlighten and entertain. Its Theater Academy, the nation's largest high-impact theater training program for young people, fosters life skills through stage skills and serves nearly 2,000 students each year. As Wisconsin's leader in arts-integrated education in schools, First Stage's dynamic Theater in Education programs promote literacy, character building and experiential learning throughout the curriculum, serving over 20,000 students each year. First Stage was selected to participate in the Partners in Education program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (2012) and was the recipient of the *Milwaukee Business Journal's* Eureka Award, recognizing creativity and innovation in business, education and the arts for its Next Steps program for students on the autism spectrum (2013, 2015). First Stage is a member of TYA/USA, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education, Milwaukee Arts Partners and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF). firststage.org.