

Bay Area Children's Theatre launches musical starring everybody's favorite llama

"Llama Llama Live!" premieres June 8 in Berkeley

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"Llama Llama Live!", a new musical inspired by the bestselling *Llama, Llama Red Pajama* series of picture books by the late Anna Dewdney, opens Saturday, June 8, at [Bay Area Children's Theatre](#) (BACT) in Berkeley.

The show will be performed in Berkeley, Sunnyvale and San Francisco this summer, and will begin a tour of the United States and Canada in January 2020. ((See place, date, time information for Bay Area venues, below.))

The musical features Kris Anthony Williams, who recently played the effervescent Red Dot in BACT's "Press Here, the Musical," as the kindergarten-age Llama and Sheila Townsend, who played the Greek goddess Hestia in BACT's "Gold: the Midas Musical," as Llama's Mama. Llama bursts into his bedroom looking frantically for his favorite red pajamas, with help from his toys. Mama comes upstairs, with his pajamas in the laundry basket, to ask about his day—his very first day at school—and put him to bed. But when she goes downstairs to do the million things that busy mothers have to do at the end of the day, Llama is too wiggly to fall asleep, and besides, he's thirsty. He howls for Mama to come back up, but she doesn't arrive. Will she ever return?

"What's amazing about the Llama Llama books," said Director Marty Johnson, "is that they are telling a story about a normal child who is going through scary moments about growing up and has to learn how to take care of himself in the simplest ways to feel safe, comfortable and become a little bit more independent. What we're doing with this musical is to bring to life some of those situations, as Llama learns that, if he's a bit anxious, he can calm down and not have a total mental breakdown at this very moment. Llama is already living in an imaginary world, but sometimes that scary shadow is just an old towel and a baseball bat left on the floor. We're just helping him deal with the choices he has made."

Award-winning playwright-composer-lyricist Austin Zumbro ("Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site the Musical") has written a panoply of clever tunes in a variety of styles to create a fun-filled, contemporary musical that expresses the imagination of childhood for both children and adults to enjoy, including a song about the history of sleepwear through the ages. Families are invited to don their favorite pajamas and come to this original, world-premiere musical, ready to do the Bedtime Dance! Recommended for ages 3 and up.

TICKETS: \$18 - \$30

BOX OFFICE: www.bactheatre.org or call [\(510\) 296-4433](tel:5102964433)

PLACE, TIME, VENUES

BERKELEY: "Llama Llama Live!" plays weekends, June 8 – July 21, at BACT's Berkeley Theatre Center, 2055 Center Street, Berkeley, CA 94704, with performances at 10:30 a.m., 1 p.m., and 4 p.m.

SUNNYVALE: The show moves to the Sunnyvale Community Center, 550 E. Remington Drive, Sunnyvale, CA 94087, on Saturday, July 27, and plays weekends through Sunday, August 4, with performances at 10:30 a.m., 1 p.m., and 4 p.m.

SAN FRANCISCO: The show completes its Bay Area run at the Children's Creativity Museum Theater, 221 4th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, playing August 10-25, with performances at 10:30 a.m., 1 p.m., and 4 p.m.

ARTISTS

Marty Johnson, Director

((Note: Marty Johnson will be in the Bay Area and available for interviews May 21 – June 10))
Named by Playbill.com as one of the top ten educators who are shaping Broadway, Marty first became involved in the world of musical theatre when he was 10 years old and his 4-H club put on an amazing rendition of *Peter Pan* where he made his own top hat. Little did he know that 25 years later, *Peter Pan* would become one of the shows he would shepherd through the Broadway Junior® adaptation process as the Director of Education and Resident Director at iTheatrics. Since 2004, Marty has developed and directed over 40 new titles for iTheatrics, including the Australian and New Zealand pilot workshops of Disney's *Newsies JR.*, DreamWork's *Madagascar JR.*, and *Ragtime School Edition*, among others. He also oversees all of iTheatrics's educational programs, including the Junior Theater Academy for students, professional development workshops for teachers, partnerships with Turnaround Arts and the Educational Theater Association, and programming for Junior Theater Festivals and Celebrations worldwide. In 2018, Marty was honored to direct the first Turnaround Arts National Talent Show held at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. That year, he also traveled to China to teach classes and direct *Music Man JR.* for the Broadway Academy in Ningbo. Additional directing credits include the world premiere of two musicals written by Laurie Berkner, *Interstellar Cinderella* and *The Amazing Adventures of Harvey and the Princess*, for New York Children's Theater and the upcoming world premiere of the new musical *Llama Llama Live!* for Bay Area Children's Theater. Marty holds a graduate degree in Theatre for Youth from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro and served for nine years as a board member for TYA/USA, the leading organization for the advancement of theatre for young audiences in the world. He co-authored *The iTheatrics Method: The Quintessential Guide to Creating Quality Musical Theatre Programs*, published by GIA Publications, Inc.

Austin Zumbro, Playwright, Composer, Lyricist

Austin is an award-winning playwright and composer, born and raised in the Bay Area. His previous musicals for Bay Area Children's Theatre's main stage include "Press Here, the Musical," "Beautiful Oops!," "Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site the Musical", "Fly Guy the Musical," "The Day the Crayons Quit, the Musical," and many others. One of his commissioned works, "Rock the Block: A Walk-and-Roll Musical," continues to tour elementary schools in the Bay Area as part of the Safe Routes to Schools program. A graduate of Stanford University, he has been on staff with Bay Area Children's Theatre since 2009.

((hi-res .jpg attached of Kris Anthony Williams as Llama. Photo credit: Alessandra Mello))

[Bay Area Children's Theatre, Sharing Art with Families for 15 Years](#)

Established in 2004, Bay Area Children's Theatre, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, serves 125,000 children and adults throughout the Bay Area, with main stage performances in Berkeley, San Francisco and Sunnyvale; programs and productions in local schools; and classes and summer camps in the East Bay, South Bay, and San Francisco.

Our Mission: To inspire young audiences with imaginative productions, introduce children of all backgrounds to the excitement of live theatre, and create an engaging, entertaining, and educational environment in which children and their families can explore and enjoy the arts.

How We Carry Out Our Mission:

- Bring high quality, professional theatre to children and their families, with artists who create vibrant worlds that are intriguing to young audiences
- Encourage young people to explore literature, language, and the arts by producing stage adaptations of great children's books
- Engage preschoolers in the world of theatre with productions specially designed for them
- Develop and perform exciting new work for the stage
- Reach out to children who might not otherwise experience live theatre with free tickets, special performances for school groups, and touring productions at local schools
- Create touring productions for young audiences nationwide
- Partner with communities to meet the need for theatre education
- Introduce children to the joy of performance through our theatre education program