

N E W S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 6, 2006

Contact: Anna Ables, Director, Marketing and Public Relations
(773) 325-7938, aables@depaul.edu,
<http://theatreschool.depaul.edu>

Chicago Playworks Presents
SIDEWAYS STORIES FROM WAYSIDE SCHOOL
Best-Selling Children's Novels Come to Life October 31- December 2

Chicago Playworks for Families and Young Audiences, the city's oldest continuously operating children's theatre, presents ***SIDEWAYS STORIES FROM WAYSIDE SCHOOL***, adapted by John Olive from the novels by Louis Sachar, directed by Brandy Austin. The play opens Tuesday, October 31 and runs through Saturday, December 2 at DePaul's Merle Reskin Theatre. Performances are Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 AM and Saturdays at 2 PM. Additional performances take place on November 27 and 29, and December 1 at 10 AM. **To purchase tickets, call the Box Office at (312) 922-1999.**

Based on three best-selling novels by Louis Sachar (*Holes*, *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom*), ***SIDEWAYS STORIES FROM WAYSIDE SCHOOL*** tells the tale of an unusual school. Instead of being one story high with 30 classrooms, it's 30 classrooms stacked one on top of the other. (But they *do* have an extra large playground!) Some say the teachers and students at Wayside School are strange and silly...and so will you. This play is recommended for ages eight and up. Please note this production replaces the previously announced play *THE DREAM CATCHER*.

Tickets are \$8. Group rates are available for 15 or more people. Tickets for Saturday performances are available online at www.ticketweb.com and www.hottix.org. Performances are at DePaul's Merle Reskin Theatre, 60 E. Balbo Drive at Michigan, Chicago. Discount parking is available with coupons from the Box Office, and the theatre is accessible via CTA busses (3-King Drive, 29-State Street, 146-Michigan/Museums and others), and CTA El stops (Red, Blue, Brown, Green, Orange and Purple).

John Olive (Adapter) is a widely produced and award-winning playwright, screenwriter, novelist and essayist, as well as a skilled and popular teacher. His *Standing On My Knees* premiered at Chicago's

Wisdom Bridge Theatre, and went on to productions in New York and around the country. His play, *Killers*, opened at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre and received its New York premiere at the 29th Street Repertory. *Evelyn and the Polka King*, written with collaborators Carl Finch and Bob Lucas, played at Actors Theatre of Louisville and Steppenwolf, among other places. Other stage plays include *Minnesota Moon*, *Careless Love*, *Clara's Play*, and an adaptation of Henry James's *The Aspern Papers*. World premieres of four of Olive's plays opened in 2001, including adaptations of Louis Sachar's popular *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* and Esther Forbes's classic *Johnny Tremain* at Seattle Children's Theatre.

A founding member of the Playwrights Center in Minneapolis, Olive has received fellowships from the Bush Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, The Jerome Foundation, the Minnesota State Arts Board, and others. He has taught creative writing at University of Minnesota, University of Washington, and Carleton College, and he currently teaches at the Loft in Minneapolis, where he lives with his wife, Mary, and their son, Michael.

Louis Sachar (Author) won a Newbery Medal for his popular book *Holes*, which was later made into a movie. During his college tenure, Sachar taught at an elementary school and wrote his first children's book, *Sideways Stories from Wayside School*, based on his experiences there. Some other Sachar titles include *Dogs Don't Tell Jokes*, *Sixth Grade Secrets* and the Marvin Redpost series. His wife, Carla, was a counselor at an elementary school when he first met her and was the model for the counselor in *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom*. More information is available at www.louissachar.com.

Brandy Austin (Director) has recently returned to Chicago after having spent several months traveling the country as Director and Tour Manager for Great American Country Television. Recent Chicago productions include directing Paula Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive* at the Athenaeum Theatre and assisting James Lapine on the Broadway In Chicago production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Brandy has also worked at Northlight Theatre, The Stockyards Theatre Project, and at Steppenwolf Theatre as Assistant Director on the 2005 Jeff Award-winning production of *The Pain and the Itch*. She holds a Master's of Fine Arts degree in directing from The Theatre School at DePaul University and received her Bachelor's of Arts degree in theatre from Belmont University in Nashville, TN. Directing credits in Nashville include: *Nice People Dancing to Good Country Music* at the Boiler Room Theatre; *Antigone* and *Graceland* at Belmont University; and *Anything Goes* at Lakewood Theatre Company. Her television credits include: Assistant Producer/Stage Manager for *James Gregory's Beef Stew for the Brain* with Sony Entertainment; and Director for *Jeff Allen – A Change of Heart* with Zingara, Inc.

SIDEWAYS STORIES/Page 3

Production staff for *SIDEWAYS STORIES FROM WAYSIDE SCHOOL* includes **Brandy Austin** (Director), **Linda Buchanan and Noelle Hathaway** (Scenic Design), **Coral Cable** (Costume Design), **Alec Kinastowski** (Lighting Design), **Mallie Halterman** (Sound Design), **Caitlin Hansen** and **Evan Fillon** (Dramaturgy) and **Kelsey Lamm** (Stage Manager).

The Cast includes **Josephine Keefe, Grace Lowman, James Lusk, Matthew Olson, Juan Gabriel Ruiz, Kristen Secrist, Christa Sheary** and **Dustin Valenta**.

SPECIAL PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS:

ASL INTERPRETED PERFORMANCES: The performances on Thursday, November 9 (10 AM) and Saturday, November 11 (2 PM) will be interpreted in American Sign Language. For further information about interpreted performances, call the Box Office or TTY (773) 325-7975.

OPENING DAY AUTOGRAPHS: After the performance on Saturday, November 4, join the cast for autographs and photo opportunities.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL: Enjoy an ice-cream treat, discussion and autograph session with the director and cast at the Hilton Chicago and Towers following the performance on Saturday, November 11. Tickets for this event are \$5.00 and are available at (312) 922-1999.

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM DAY: At the performance on Saturday, November 11, audience members are eligible to win family memberships and more from the Chicago Children's Museum (www.chichildrensmuseum.org).

EDUARDO'S DAY: At the performance on Saturday, November 11, audience members are eligible to win a pizza party for 20, plus other giveaways from Edwardo's Natural Pizza.

NATURE MUSEUM DAY: At the performance on Saturday, November 18, audience members are eligible to win family memberships from the Notebaert Nature Museum (www.chias.org).

GLAZED EXPRESSIONS' DAY: At the performance on Saturday, December 2, audience members are eligible to win a birthday party for 15 and other prizes from this "make your own pottery" store.

DINNER OFFERS: Receive a 15% discount at the Pavilion Restaurant, Buckingham's, or Kitty O'Sheas (all at the Hilton Chicago and Towers) with coupons from the Box Office. Other dining, from casual to four-star, is available within walking distance of the theatre – on Dearborn Street in the Printer's Row Historic District, as well as many other locations nearby. Obtain complete dining information from the Box Office.

The Theatre School at DePaul University educates, trains and inspires students of theatre in a conservatory setting that is rigorous, disciplined and culturally diverse, and that strives for the highest level of professional skill and artistry. A commitment to diversity and equality in education is central to the school's mission. As an integral part of the training, The Theatre School produces public programs and performances from a wide repertoire of classic, contemporary and original plays that challenge, entertain and stimulate the imagination. The school seeks to enhance the intellectual and cultural life of the university community, the city and the profession.

###