



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 25, 2021

Abby Frohne, Assistant Director of Marketing
afrohne@cocastl.org, 314.561.4876

TICKETS ON SALE FOR COCA'S INAUGURAL COCAWRITES FESTIVAL

A Festival featuring new work by Mariah Richardson, Colin McLaughlin, and COCA students

ST. LOUIS—Tickets are now on sale for [COCA's](#) premiere of the [COCAwrites Festival](#), a showcase of new work created by a multigenerational team of St. Louis theatre professionals and COCA students for multigenerational audiences. Due to COVID-19, the Festival is offered as a socially-distanced outdoor experience on COCA's East Lot on March 27–28 at 7:00 p.m., or virtually by online streaming anytime March 27–April 10.

The Festival features headliner *Suffer the Children*, a play by Mariah Richardson and directed by Jacqueline Thompson with Associate Director Gaby Rodriguez, as a film projected onto COCA's new Ferring East Wing. In-person audiences will also witness live readings of 10-minute companion plays written by COCA students. The plays, *A Day in the Life of Finnigan Daniels* by Sophia Levinson and *Hate the Sin, Love the Sinner* by Nikki Prodes, are directed by COCA students and overseen by the Festival's Associate Director and Dramaturg. The plays feature actors Ryan Lawson-Maeske, Carl Overly Jr., Thomasina Clark, and David Wassilak.

Suffer the Children is part of a series of plays about Delilah, a young girl exploring questions of community and coming-of-age in St. Louis. This dramatic piece looks at issues of race, white supremacy, gun violence, and immigration, highlighting the real fears that children, and adults, face today. The play asks St. Louis audiences to lean in and listen to the words and seek restoration through the ideas of our young people.

"*Suffer the Children* is a play about the times we are living in," says Director Jacqueline Thompson. "Our team needed to address the reality of St. Louisans and the reason so many theatres have needed to get creative to reach their people. We transitioned to a theatrical film and developed the script to reflect how COVID-19 affects our neighbors. Audiences can see this production and connect with their community in a different way."

Early ticket holders have exclusive access to attend a live virtual reading of local playwright Colin McLaughlin's new play, *RealTalk*, on March 12 at 7:00 p.m., as well as sneak peek releases of *Suffer the Children* and a rebroadcast of COCA's Speaker Series featuring Golden Globe Award Winner and St. Louis Repertory Theatre Playwright-in-Residence Regina Taylor.

Audiences joining in-person will be seated socially-distanced outdoors and should bring their own lawn chair. The COCAwrites Festival is recommended for ages 11 and up. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit cocastl.org/coca-presents.

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ABOUT COCA

COCA's mission is to *enrich lives and build community through the arts*. With a commitment to equity and access, COCA serves as a regional hub for learning in and through the arts for all ages from all backgrounds. One of the most diverse cultural institutions in St. Louis, COCA serves over 50,000 students, audience members, artists and families from over 220 zip codes across the St. Louis region every year. The fourth largest multi-disciplinary arts organization in the country, COCA is committed to supporting the vitality and creativity of over 200 artists at the heart of its work in schools, community centers, local business, cultural organizations, and on-site at its campus in University City.