



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PNC Arts Alive Presents  
Metro Theater Company World Premiere**

**Funds from prestigious grant help bring new play to schools and other community sites**

St. Louis, MO – Metro Theater Company has been named one of only sixteen arts organizations in the St. Louis region to receive a PNC Arts Alive grant. PNC Arts Alive and Metro Theater Company will present *Super Cowgirl and Mighty Miracle*, a new play by José Cruz González.

An initiative of the PNC Foundation, Arts Alive is designed to make the visual and performing arts more accessible to diverse audiences. The grant will help children of all ethnicities from families at different income levels to delight in and learn from professional theater.

“Through the PNC Arts Alive initiative, we can contribute to St. Louis’ outstanding cultural arts, and support new and imaginative arts programs that help enrich our community and strengthen our regional economy,” explained Rick Sems, St. Louis regional president of PNC Bank. “PNC Arts Alive recognizes the value of what Metro Theater Company contributes to our community.”

Directed by Metro Theater Company artistic director Carol North, *Super Cowgirl and Mighty Miracle* is set in a neighborhood where dandelions grow and foreclosure signs flourish. At the top of the play, six-year-old Cory is in tears as her father drives off to find work, leaving her with her Grandmother Autumn, whom she doesn’t even know. Neither particularly wants the other, but necessity requires they negotiate terms to live together. Into the fray comes the third character in the play, a stray dog who is also trying to find a place he can call home.

Nationally-renowned playwright José Cruz González wrote the non-speaking role of the dog expressly for Metro Theater Company’s versatile Resident Artist, Nicholas Kryah. Metro Theater Company and Mr. González have worked together for many years. Metro Theater Company commissioned and premiered two earlier works from the playwright, *Earth Songs* (2004) and *Salt and Pepper* (2007).

“José Cruz González is truly one of the nation’s most talented playwrights writing for young audiences,” said Carol North, artistic director of Metro Theater Company. “González has a rare gift for creating seemingly simple stories that pack a dramatic wallop.” In *Super Cowgirl and*

*Mighty Miracle*, González weaves together foreclosure, family dysfunction, ethnic and racial prejudice, poverty, pride, charity, and forgiveness – “All in a piece that runs less than an hour,” added North.

*Super Cowgirl and Mighty Miracle* will tour throughout the St Louis region to schools and other community sites, reaching thousands of young people. Some, like the characters in the play, are experiencing the challenges of a struggling economy and keeping a family together. Almost three years of recession and record unemployment have adversely impacted families and student self-esteem. This engaging play addresses current issues with hope and humor.

“The PNC Foundation is a good friend to our community and to our children,” said Metro Theater Company managing director Matthew Neufeld. “In presenting this new play, PNC demonstrates its continued commitment to the arts and access to artistic work.”

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***Inspired by the intelligence and emotional wisdom of young people, Metro Theater Company creates professional theater, fosters inclusive community and nurtures meaningful learning through the arts. Founded in 1973, the Company tours its productions to schools and community sites throughout the St. Louis region, presents public performances for family audiences and offers a range of education programs. Metro Theater Company has performed for more than two million people and has toured nationally and internationally. For more information, visit [www.metrotheatercompany.org](http://www.metrotheatercompany.org) or call 314-997-6777.***

The plays of **José Cruz González** include *Super Cowgirl and Mighty Miracle*, *Earth Songs*, *Salt & Pepper*, *The Sun Serpent*, *Invierno*, *Sunsets and Margaritas*, *The Heart's Desire*, *Tomás and the Library Lady*, *The Cloud Gatherer*, and *September Shoes*. A collection of his plays, *Nine Plays by José Cruz González: Magical Realism & Mature Themes in Theatre for Young Audiences*, was published by the University of Texas Press in 2009.

Mr. González has written for *PAZ*, the Emmy Award nominated television series produced by Discovery Kids for The Learning Channel. Mr. González was a recipient of a 2004 TCG/Pew National Theatre Residency grant. In 1997 he was awarded a NEA/TCG Theatre Residency Program for Playwrights, and in 1985 was a NEA Director Fellow.

Mr. González teaches theater at California State University at Los Angeles. He is a member of The Dramatists Guild of America and TYA/USA. He is an Associate Artist with Cornerstone Theater Company (CA), and Playwright in Residence with Childsplay (AZ).

**Carol North** joined Metro Theater Company in 1977 as an ensemble member, and in 1980 was named the Company's second artistic director, succeeding founder Zaro Weil. North has directed most of Metro Theater Company's acclaimed commissioned, original and repertory works, including recent productions of the U.S. Premiere of *Hana's Suitcase* (2007), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (2009) and *The Giver* (2011). Under her direction, Metro Theater Company has toured to forty-one states, including Alaska and Hawaii, and performed in international festivals in Canada, Rome, Japan and Taiwan. Honors include the Zony “Best Director Award” (1994) for David Saar's *The Yellow Boat*, produced by Childsplay, Inc. of Tempe, Arizona;

the 1997 Missouri Arts Award for “Outstanding Contributions to the Citizens of Missouri”; the 1998 “Excellence in the Arts” Award from the Arts & Education Council of Greater St. Louis; the 2003 Visionary Award presented by Grand Center for “Outstanding Arts Professional”; and the 2006 Mickey Miners Award for Lifetime Achievement presented by the International Producers and Presenters of Theater For Young Audiences (IPAY). She has served as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts and as a site reporter for the agency from 1988-2001. She served as vice-president of the Board of Theater for Young Audiences/USA, the international organization of professional theaters for young people, and served as co-editor for the publication, TYA TODAY. She currently serves as a Trustee of the Children’s Theatre Foundation of America.

**Nicholas Kryah** joined Metro Theater Company in 1977 and celebrated his 5,000<sup>th</sup> performance with the Company last January in the title role of *The Giver*. In addition to acting in nearly every Metro Theater Company production for the past thirty-four years, Nick designs and builds touring sets, and has written four plays produced by the Company: an acclaimed adaptation of *Beowulf* in 1990; *Iceman*, which opened the One Theatre World Festival at the Kennedy Center in 2000; *A Short Hike on a Long Trail* (1998), which recounts his adventure on the Appalachian Trail; and *Stix & Stonz* (2005). He has directed three Metro Theater Company productions: *Long Road to Freedom* by Jan Lucas, *Delilah’s Wish* by Mariah L. Richardson and the 2010 production of Wesley Middleton’s *Tomato Plant Girl*. Kryah holds an M.A. in Dramatic Theory, Literature and Criticism from Michigan State University and a B.A. from the Conservatory of Theatre Arts at Webster University. He has worked for the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Opera Theatre of St. Louis and the Goodman Theatre in Chicago. For six seasons, Kryah served as stage director and playwright for Tales & Scales, Evansville, Indiana. A versatile artist, craftsman and natural-born connector, Nicholas Kryah has been a cornerstone of Metro Theater Company’s mission and programs for three and half decades.

**Matthew Neufeld** joined Metro Theater Company in 2009 to become managing director. His theater career includes roles as arts manager, administrator, consultant, teaching artist, director, and actor. A St. Louis native, Neufeld traces his pivotal experience with professional theater back to the Metro Theater Company production of *Beowulf*. Prior to coming to Metro Theater Company, he served as Assistant to the Managing Director and CenterStage Coordinator at Hartford Stage in Hartford, Connecticut. While in Hartford, Neufeld founded [improve your life!], an arts-based professional development company for performers and non-performing individuals. Prior to Connecticut, Neufeld founded the Drawing Board Arts Project in New York City, where he served as Director of Marketing and Development, as well as Resident Director. He was an associate for Skybetter and Associates, an administrative arts consultancy for New York dance companies, and served as Development Associate and Producer for WTE Theatre, where he also performed in the UK Premiere of Nicky Silver’s *The Altruists*. In 2003, he served as the inaugural Program Coordinator for HOWL! Festival of the East Village Arts, and served in that capacity again in 2004. Neufeld is a graduate of the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. He is also a graduate of The Field’s Artist-Manager Partnerships Program.