

For Immediate Release

The New York Children's Theater Festival Accepting Submissions

First festival ever created for the development of children's theater in New York

New York, NY, November 17, 2011 - - [The New York Children's Theater Festival](http://www.newyorkchildrenstheaterfestival.org) has officially begun accepting submissions this week for its inaugural season. The festival, founded by Michael Shawn Lewis, Chelsey Shannon and Renee Barnett, will provide a birthplace in New York City for new live children's entertainment from around the globe, and serve as a platform for writers and producers who are passionate about developing innovative theatrical experiences for children.

According to Lewis, "We wanted to create a festival devoted to the development of children's theater in New York City. There has been a missing link in the children's entertainment industry lately, specifically regarding live children's theater. Our aim is to greatly widen the scope and spectrum of existing theater offerings for children and bring new respect and heightened awareness to the art form and the artists involved. We hope this festival will bridge the missing link within the entire theater community and help foster the growth of theater audiences of all ages."

The New York Children's Theater Festival will premiere April 20, 2012 and run through May 5, 2012. It will feature three winning submissions who will produce their works for the New York City stage. Submissions are being accepted now through December 20, 2011. Musicals, plays, puppetry, event presentations, and any other live theatrical form of children's entertainment are encouraged and welcome. Work that has been previously produced may also be submitted for consideration. For submission details, visit www.newyorkchildrenstheaterfestival.org.

Every submission will be read by a team of 30 industry professionals including artists, writers, producers and designers from leading national theaters, Broadway, and children's television. The finalists will be judged by a Festival Panel of ten top industry leaders including Michael Jung, Vice President of Theatrical Development at Walt Disney Imagineering, and John Tartaglia who has been nominated for an Emmy Award (creator, star of Disney Channel's *Johnny and the Sprites*), Tony Award (Broadway's *Avenue Q*), and Drama Desk Award (creator, producer, and voices for *John Tartaglia's Imagination*).

Shannon says, "We are getting extraordinary support and enthusiasm from the industry, with top names signing on from the east and west coasts -- and leading theaters in between -- to join us as judges, readers, and board members. It is a very exciting time for children's theater."

"We hope to attract an international selection of submissions not only from working theater professionals but also from students. This is an opportunity that has not existed before and we feel confident that the festival will grow tremendously. This year we will feature three winners during the festival. Next year we plan to at least double that," Barnett added.

The New York Children's Theater Festival is filing as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. More at www.newyorkchildrenstheaterfestival.org.

[About the founders:](#)

Michael Shawn Lewis received a 2011 Drama Desk Award nomination as producer of *John Tartaglia's ImaginOcean*, the internationally- acclaimed children's musical Off-Broadway and on an international tour. He has co-created and produced family entertainment for Royal Caribbean and Carnival Cruise Lines and serves as a consultant to Walt Disney Imagineering. As an actor his credits include *The Phantom of the Opera* and *The Woman in White* on Broadway; *Elisabeth - the Musical*, *Les Miserables*, and numerous productions of *Phantom* in Europe; and a number of Off-Broadway productions including *This Side of Paradise*.

Chelsey Shannon was the marketing manager of Play Me a Story, a New York children's storytelling company, and co-founded Rumpus Children's Theatre in Manhattan. As a performer, she worked around the country and in NYC in numerous productions for Theatreworks USA, Working Man's Clothes Productions, The New School, The Sam French Festival, The New York Theatre Workshop, Columbia Stages, Prime Stage, and The City Theatre, among others.

Renee Barnett has toured with ArtsPower National Touring Theater in several children's productions and has worked as a music teacher with a variety of children's centers throughout the city. She is also a piano teacher for children with special needs. She co-founded Rumpus Children's Theatre.

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