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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Chicago Humanities Festival  
Celebrates 15 Years of International Children's Theater**

**2014 Stages, Sights & Sounds**

**To Feature First Australian and Spanish Productions,  
U.S. Premiere, Children's Author Events, and More**

**May 6–24 in Chicago**

**CHICAGO, IL—April 16, 2014—**The Chicago Humanities Festival (CHF) celebrates 15 years of presenting international children's theater with the **2014 Stages, Sights & Sounds** festival, **May 6–24 in Chicago**. This year's Stages, Sights & Sounds will feature inaugural productions from Australia and Spain, including the quirky toy-centric *Fluff* from Sydney's **Cre8ion**, the climate change tale of *The Adventures of Alvin Sputnik: Deep Sea Explorer* from Perth's **The Last Great Hunt**, and the object driven *Animales* from Madrid's **El Retablo**, featuring master puppeteer **Pablo Vergne**. The festival will also include the U.S. premiere of *Kaguya: The Bamboo Princess and other Stories* by returning puppet artist **Nori Sawa** (Japan/Czech Republic). Additionally, Stages, Sights & Sounds will introduce several new programs, including readings with children's book authors **Timothy Basil Ering** and **Jon Scieszka**, and the **Chicago Puppetolio**. Tickets are \$14 for adults and \$7 for children (17 and under), and are on sale now at [chicagohumanities.org/stages](http://chicagohumanities.org/stages) and via phone at 312-494-9509.

"This year's Stages, Sights & Sounds will be a 'festival of firsts,'" said **Julia Mayer, CHF Assistant Director of Programming and Performance**. "We're excited to present our first productions from Australia and Spain, as well as the U.S. premiere of *Kaguya* from returning favorite Nori Sawa. There are numerous ways to engage in the festival this year, including two new children's author events, and we're thrilled to offer these cultural opportunities to children and families in Chicago!"

For the first time, Stages, Sights & Sounds will host productions from Australia and Spain, featuring artists from Sydney's **Cre8ion**, Perth's **The Last Great Hunt**, and Madrid's **El Retablo**. **Cre8ion**, specializing in producing and touring theatrical shows and events of scale internationally, will present *Fluff*, a quirky celebration of lost toys. Created by company member Christine Johnston, *Fluff* tells the story of the Gingham, a traveling trio who rescue long-lost misfit toys, with a mix of sound, story, and video. **The Last Great Hunt** is a collective of artists from Western Australia who create, produce, and tour new innovative theater. The company will present the sold-out production of *The Adventures of Alvin Sputnik: Deep Sea Explorer*. Hailing from Spain, **Pablo Vergne** of **El Retablo** has been creating and performing for 25 years. A master puppeteer, Vergne will star in the festival's sold-out show for very young audiences (3+), *Animales*.

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Festival favorite **Nori Sawa** will return with the U.S. premiere of ***Kaguya: The Bamboo Princess and other Stories***. Born in Japan but now based in the Czech Republic, Sawa began his professional activities in Europe for the Cultural Ministry of the Japanese Government. He has performed and taught theater arts in more than 20 countries and was last seen in Chicago at Stages, Sights & Sounds in 2012. Sawa will debut his newest piece *Kaguya*, which depicts the tenth-century folktale of a Japanese princess through the use of puppets, masks, music, and physical theater. Sawa will also perform in the sold-out production of ***Fairy Tales***.

In addition to international performances, the 2014 Stages, Sights & Sounds will offer several new programs. This year's festival will feature readings with two critically-acclaimed children's book authors: **Timothy Basil Ering** and **Jon Scieszka**. Best known as the illustrator of the Newbery Medal winner *The Tale of Despereaux*, Ering will read from his newest work—***The Almost Fearless Hamilton Squidlegger***, an endearing tale of a boy overcoming his bedtime fears with a little help from Dad—and create original illustrations. Scieszka, widely known for his book *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*, will read from his latest book ***Battle Bunny***, a tongue-in-cheek “banal” children's book that has been rewritten by a scribbling child. This year's festival will also include the inaugural, sold-out Chicago Puppetolio, curated with **Julia Miler** (Manual Cinema; Nasty, Brutish and Short) and featuring **Michael Montenegro, Blair Thomas, Cynthia Von Orthal, Sea Beast Puppet Co.** and **Karen Hoyer**.

The 2014 Stages, Sights and Sounds festival marks the 15th year of presenting original performances from across the globe. Each year, CHF's international children's theater festival serves more than 7,000 people, including over 5,000 students and teachers in and around Chicago. This year's Stages, Sights & Sounds festival is the largest in CHF history, with more than 30 international and local artists offering 48 programs within a three-week period.

## 2014 Stages, Sights & Sounds Schedule:



[Animales](#) | El Retablo | Spain

**\*SOLD OUT**

**Chicago Cultural Center Dance Studio | 60 minutes | Ages 3+**

*Animales* stokes the imagination. Master puppeteer **Pablo Vergne** transforms everyday objects—knit gloves, hats, a ruler—into animals and magical beings.



[The Adventures of Alvin Sputnik: Deep Sea Explorer](#) | By Tim Watts

**The Last Great Hunt | Australia**

**SOLD OUT | Storefront Theater | 60 min | Ages 12+**

Blending puppetry, animation, and music, *Alvin Sputnik* tells the tale of love, loss, and heroism as a survivor of extreme climate change must use his wits to save the planet. *This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.*



[Reading with Timothy Basil Ering](#)

**Saturday, May 10 | 2 p.m. | Storefront Theater | 60 min | All Ages**

**Timothy Basil Ering**, the illustrator of the Newbery Medal winner *The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo and other books, is also the acclaimed author-illustrator of the popular children's books *The Story of Frog Belly Rat Bone* and *Necks Out for Adventure*, where he reveals his love of wordplay (hornly scratchers and scrintalberry leaves, anyone?) and a fresh, expressive illustration style. His newest book is *The Almost Fearless Hamilton Squidlegger*. At this exclusive author event, Ering reads from his work and creates original illustrations.



[Chicago Puppetolio](#)

**SOLD OUT**

**Storefront Theater | 60 min | Ages 8+**

Curated with **Julia Miler** (Manual Cinema; Nasty, Brutish and Short), two different programs bring together the works of **Michael Montenegro, Blair Thomas, Cynthia Von Orthal, Sea Beast Puppet Co.** and **Karen Hoyer**.



[Fairy Tales](#) | Nori Sawa | Japan/Czech Republic

**SOLD OUT**

**Storefront Theater | 60 min | Ages 5+**

A master physical comedian and puppeteer, **Nori Sawa** presents beautiful, sometimes twisted versions of traditional tales, as well as enchanting stories of his own.

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**[Fluff](#) | Cre8ion | Australia**

**Saturday, May 17 | 11 a.m. & 3 p.m.**

**Sunday, May 18 | 3 p.m.**

**Victory Gardens Biograph Theater, Začek McVay Theater | 60 min | Ages 5+**

*Yo Gabba Gabba!* meets *Absolutely Fabulous* in offbeat, off-the-wall, fantastically funny *Fluff*. Welcome to the mod, mad world of the Gingham, a traveling trio who rescue long-lost misfit toys. Fluff was dropped under the couch, Squibbly was abandoned in the gutter, and Disco Frog was caught in a ceiling fan. But don't fret, dear pet! With a comedic, quirky, and colorful mix of sound, story, video, and vacuum, toys are discovered, recovered, and invited to join this plaid-patterned family.



**[Reading with Jon Scieszka](#)**

**Sunday, May 18 | 11 a.m. | Victory Gardens Biograph Theater, Začek McVay Theater**

**60 min | All Ages**

In 2008, the Librarian of Congress named **Jon Scieszka** the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. He is the bestselling author of more than 25 books for kids, including *The Stinky Cheese Man* and *Other Fairly Stupid Tales*, *Math Curse*, *Robot Zot!*, and the *Time Warp Trio* series. Scieszka founded "Guys Read" to encourage a passion for reading among young boys. His most recent book is *Battle Bunny*. Oh, and did we mention that he is hilarious?



**[Kaguya: The Bamboo Princess and Other Stories](#) | Nori Sawa**

**Japan/Czech Republic | U.S. Premiere**

**Saturday, May 24 | 11 a.m. & 3 p.m.**

**Victory Gardens Biograph Theater, Začek McVay Theater | 60 min | Ages 10+**

The runaway favorite performer of 2012, **Nori Sawa** brings a new show to this year's festival—*Kaguya: The Bamboo Princess*, his unique version of a legendary Japanese folktale. This tenth-century story is likely Japan's oldest narrative, and it tells the tale of Kaguya, who was discovered as a baby inside a bamboo shoot. Her story—from her adoptive parents to her many admirers, among them the Emperor—is one of loyalty, magic, and transcendence.

**\*All performances are general admission seating. CHF is often able to accommodate patrons from a waitlist or at the door. To be added to the waitlist for a sold-out program, please call the CHF Box Office at 312-494-9509.**

## Venues

**Chicago Cultural Center** | 77 E. Randolph St., Chicago, IL 60602

**Storefront Theater** | 66 E. Randolph St., Chicago, IL 60601

**Victory Gardens Biograph Theater** | 2433 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago, IL 60614

## Tickets

Tickets are \$14 for adults and \$7 for children (17 and under) and are on sale now at [chicagohumanities.org/stages](http://chicagohumanities.org/stages) or via the **CHF Box Office** at **312-494-9509** from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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## About the Chicago Humanities Festival

For 25 years, the **Chicago Humanities Festival** has celebrated the questions that shape and define us as individuals, communities, and cultures. For the intellectually curious, CHF's vibrant **year-round programming** and robust **Fall Festival** offer the opportunity to engage with some of the world's most brilliant minds. Collaborating with leading arts, cultural, and educational organizations, it presents scholars, artists and architects, thinkers, theologians, and policy makers that change how we see the world, where we're from, and where we're going. CHF also presents the spring **Stages, Sights & Sounds** international children's theater festival. Under the leadership of **Executive Director Phillip Bahar** and **Artistic Director Matti Bunzl**, CHF has become an institution central to the fabric of the city. Visit [chicagohumanities.org](http://chicagohumanities.org) for more information.