

Mathropolis SUM-PUNDIT

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Kid Zero Changes the Way Kids Think About Math!

The audience erupted in another boisterous ovation as the cast of *The Adventures of Kid Zero* took their final bow. “Great Play! I loved everything!” a third grader shouted, exiting the theater. The sold-out house of 2nd to 4th grade Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students percolated with energy as the youngsters spilled into the lobby and headed for the string of busses waiting to return them to school. Many were still singing the refrain of the show’s title song, “Zero, Kid Zero...” The scene was repeated daily during the run of DBA Studios’ premiere arts and education production, *The Adventures of Kid Zero*. More than 4,500 CPS students, representing over thirty-five schools, attended the show. Children were bubbling over with enthusiasm for a play about math!



Opening at the Apollo Theater in February 2005 and remounted at the Lakeshore Theater in November and December 2005, *The Adventures of Kid Zero* was written by award-winning playwright and DBA Studios co-founder Ifa Bayeza with music by renowned jazz artist Harvey Mason. In the highly original script, Bayeza anthropomorphizes the world of mathematics and sets it in a futuristic city called Mathropolis. The story follows the journey of Zero, the youngest member of the Digit family, and the plight of the city when she goes missing. Through her journey, Zero meets a host of eccentric characters including Traffic Cops Plus and Minus, runaway rapper Little X, The Woman with Square Feet, Father Times, Zenfinity and more. Little does she know that her absence has thrown the great Mathropolis into chaos. Mayor McGraph tries to keep things calm, but numbers everywhere are running wild. In less than an hour, audiences are taken on a rocket ride from basic counting and numbers placement to the Big Bang, from a typical numerical household to the outer edges of the universe. “Bayeza’s



wordplay brims with fun, and the performers share the exuberance!” says the Chicago Reader, “Beneath the scholarly hijinks of this kids’ show lies the tale of a lonely child, derided as a ‘nothing,’ coming to discover her own value.” Under the direction of Goodman Theatre’s Michael Maggio Fellow, Ann Filmer, the multi-racial cast of nine actors plays twenty-seven characters.

The Adventures of Kid Zero is the centerpiece of The *Kid Zero*

Project. In addition to the play, each student receives a fun and educational Activity Book, while the teachers are offered pre-play guides and a series of Professional Development Workshops. “The play grabs the students right away,” notes DBA Studios co-founder and *Kid Zero* co-producer Pam Dickler. “The Activity Book lets them continue the experience with fun and challenging exercises, and the workshops give teachers the tools to enliven math in their classes.” “This multi-layered approach is changing the way kids think about math,” adds Bayeza. Assessment data on the project confirms that. According to surveys of teachers whose students attended the show, 100% reported *Kid Zero* positively affected their students’ attitude toward math, with 48% saying student attitudes were greatly changed, while 96% also reported the project gave their students new tools for understanding math. The *Kid Zero* Project was generously sponsored by Target with additional support from the CPS Magnet Cluster Initiative.

“Brilliant!” “Great show!” “Amazing feat of writing!” audience comments continued. “Superlative, to infinity and beyond!” Or as one child simply put it, “This was the best play of my life!” Plans are under way for *Kid Zero*’s triumphant return to the Chicago stage in the 2006-2007 school year. Watch for signs of the missing digit! For more information: call 312-661-9100 or go to www.dba-studios.com.

