



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **First Stage announces third season of AMPLIFY BIPOC PLAY SERIES**

*-Featuring three play readings by BIPOC playwrights Shá Cage, José Casas and Idris Goodwin-*

**Milwaukee, WI – June 15, 2022** – First Stage, one of the nation’s leading theaters for young people and families, is delighted to announce the third season of their **Amplify BIPOC Play Series** beginning **August 13, 2022**. In support of First Stage’s ongoing commitment to the development of new work, with an intentional focus on lifting voices of underrepresented playwrights and artists, this season’s **Amplify Series** will be presented as readings of three new plays, to be held at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center and other community locations. A talkback will follow each reading, allowing audiences opportunities to share their voices with the playwright and artists – helping shape the development of the plays and potential future productions at First Stage. Commented First Stage Artistic Director **Jeff Frank**, “We’re excited to continue our investment in new play development and in lifting up the voices of underrepresented artists. We also look forward to engaging our audiences in conversation about the work as we consider selections for future seasons.”

The Amplify Series launched virtually in the spring of 2021 during the pandemic and featured the world premiere virtual productions of *COPPER HORNS IN WATER* by First Stage alum Ty Defoe and *UNMUTED* by First Stage Resident Playwright Alvaro Saar Rios and composer Deborah Wicks La Puma. A second Amplify Series was offered virtually in the fall of 2021 and included the world premiere virtual productions of *HOW TO ACTUALLY GRADUATE IN A VIRTUAL WORLD* by Nikkole Salter, *STEP KIDS* by Tyrone L. Robinson and Postell Pringle and *THE TALE OF LA LLORONA AS TOLD BY CONSUELO CHAVEZ* by José Casas. These virtual productions were all well received, both critically and with audiences, and reflected First Stage’s commitment to commissioning work by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) whose

voices offer the organization an opportunity to expand its artistic horizons and develop its audience's perspective. All productions were offered for free to viewing and in-person audiences.

First Stage will again offer the 2022/23 Amplify Series at no cost to attendees, but registration will be required. For additional information, please go to: [firststage.org/events-tickets/2022-23-season/amplify-reading-series/](https://firststage.org/events-tickets/2022-23-season/amplify-reading-series/) or call (414) 267-2961.

## **2022/23 AMPLIFY BIPOC PLAY SERIES**

### **HIDDEN HEROES**

By **Shá Cage**

Based on the book *Hidden Human Computers: The Black Women of NASA* by Sue Bradford Edwards and Duchess Harris. Published by ABDO Publishing, Minneapolis, MN.

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Directed by **Samantha D. Montgomery**

Presented as part of the **Milwaukee Black Theater Festival**

Saturday, August 13, 2022 at 1 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.

**Milwaukee Youth Arts Center**

Sunday August 14, 2002 at 1 p.m.

**Location TBD**

"It doesn't matter what you look like, what your size is, what your color is. You can be anything you want to, but you do have to work at it," says Annie Easley's mother to her young daughter. In the 1950s and '60s, the black women of NASA fought against racial and gender discrimination for a place on the leading edge of math, science and technology. Be inspired as we tell the stories of how these women were influenced as young girls to eventually make critical contributions that launched U.S. astronauts into space and returned them safely back to Earth. *For families with young people ages 7 and up.*

**From Jeff:** "This remarkable play by Shá Cage celebrates the brilliance and creativity of these young girls as they break barriers, conquer the seemingly impossible and become the women whose work in mathematics and engineering would help make space exploration possible."

### **FRANKIE: THE UNTOLD STORY OF A GURL FRANKENSTEIN**

By **José Casas**

Originally Commissioned by Florida Studio Theatre

Saturday October 15, 2022 at 1 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

**Milwaukee Youth Arts Center**

Sunday October 16, 2022 at 3:30 p.m.

**Location TBD**

Inspired by Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, playwright José Casas transforms this timeless story through the prism of Francesca Frankenstein, a brilliant young girl who, in her quest for a friend, plans a one-of-a-kind project for the school science fair. Original, thought-provoking, and filled with humor and heart, discover what happens when Francesca's project literally comes to life in this bilingual play. *For families with young people ages 10 and up.*

**From Jeff:** "Originally commissioned by Florida Studio Theatre, First Stage is thankful to be a part of the development of this new script by our friend José Casas (CHRISTMASTOWN COMES TO FIRST STAGE, THE TALE OF LA LLORONA AS TOLD BY CONSEULO CHAVEZ). We're excited to hear what audiences think."

## **THE FORGOTTEN GIRL**

By **India Hill Brown**

Adapted by **Idris Goodwin**

Directed by **Jon Royal**

Thursday, March 30, 2023 at 7 p.m.

**Milwaukee Youth Arts Center**

On a cold winter night, Iris and her best friend, Daniel, play in the freshly fallen snow in the woods when they stumble upon the gravestone of a young girl, Avery Moore. Strange things begin to happen, and Iris and Daniel research the area to find answers. They learn of their town's history of segregation and become determined to restore Avery's grave and pay proper respect for her and others buried there. A ghostly tale with a historical twist, this empowering tale that examines the connection of past and present, friendship and forgiveness. *For families with young people ages 10 and up.*

**From Jeff:** "Browsing the [Niche Book Bar](#) website, I came across this book and immediately fell in love and reached out about acquiring the dramatic rights. Excited to have nationally recognized playwright Idris Goodwin adapt this ghost story/mystery that is also grounded in the reckonings of our social history. A powerful examination of friendship, those who are overlooked and the price of both."

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**COVID Protocols:** In accordance with the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center guidelines and the CDC recommended guidelines, masks are now optional at Milwaukee Youth Arts Center. MYAC will continue to follow the CDC recommendations and adjust when necessary. First Stage COVID

safety protocols and updates can be viewed here: [firststage.org/plan-your-visit/safety-security/-performances](https://firststage.org/plan-your-visit/safety-security/-performances)

To learn more about First Stage's 2022/23 season, please visit [firststage.org](https://firststage.org) or call (414) 267-2961.

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### **About First Stage**

First Stage is one of the nation's leading theaters for young people and families. First Stage touches hearts, engages minds and transforms lives by creating extraordinary theater experiences through professional theater productions that inspire, enlighten and entertain. Its Theater Academy, the nation's largest high-impact theater training program for young people, fosters life skills through stage skills and serves nearly 2,000 students each year. As Wisconsin's leader in arts-integrated education in schools, First Stage's dynamic Theater in Education programs promote literacy, character building and experiential learning throughout the curriculum, serving over 20,000 students each year. First Stage was selected to participate in the Partners in Education program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (2012) and was the recipient of the Milwaukee Business Journal's Eureka Award, recognizing creativity and innovation in business, education and the arts for its Next Steps program for students on the autism spectrum (2013, 2015). First Stage is a member of TYA/USA, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education, Milwaukee Arts Partners and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF). [firststage.org](https://firststage.org)