



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**First Stage presents action-packed,
mythical adventure**

**THE LIGHTNING THIEF:
The Percy Jackson Musical**

-Filled with powerful music, ingenious storytelling, high action and compelling characters-

Milwaukee, WI – January 4, 2024 – Get ready for a thrilling theatrical ride when First Stage opens **THE LIGHTNING THIEF: The Percy Jackson Musical** on **February 3, 2024** at the Marcus Center’s Todd Wehr Theater. Adapted from the popular book *The Lightning Thief* by **Rick Riordan**, with book by **Joe Tracz** and music and lyrics by **Rob Rokicki**, the production will be directed by First Stage Artistic Director **Jeff Frank**, music directed by **Tim Rebers**, choreographed by **Ami Majeskie** and fight direction by **Jamey Feshold**. Critics have called this a “thoroughly endearing family-friendly musical” (Charles Isherwood, *Broadway News*) with “one foot in *Harry Potter* and another in *DEAR EVAN HANSEN*” (*Chicago Tribune*), this “winning adaptation” (*Hollywood Reporter*) of Rick Riordan’s bestselling Disney-Hyperion novel is “compelling for fans and new audiences alike!” (*TheaterMania*). As a son of Poseidon, Percy Jackson has newly discovered powers he can’t control, monsters on his trail and is on a quest to find Zeus’ lightning bolt to prevent a war between the Greek gods. Featuring an exciting original rock score, this musical adaptation of the *New York Times* bestseller is an action-packed, mythical adventure for Percy fans of all ages! Sponsored by **Molitor Foundation**.

THE LIGHTNING THIEF: The Percy Jackson Musical runs **February 3 – March 10, 2024** at the Marcus Center’s Todd Wehr Theater, located at 929 N. Water Street in downtown Milwaukee. Tickets start at **\$20** and can be purchased in person at the Marcus Center Box Office at 929 N. Water Street, by phone at **(414) 273-7206** or online at firststage.org. *Performance runtime is*

approximately 75 minutes, which includes a brief intermission. Suggested for adults, teens and children ages 7 – 9 and 10 – 12. Please note: Due to high ticket demand, a week has been added to the performance run. Patrons are encouraged to buy tickets now while there is still good availability and best seating.

Artistic Director/ Director Jeff Frank shared this about the play: “I’m a huge fan of Greek mythology and loved what Rick Riordan created with his Percy Jackson series. And this musical adaptation quite simply ROCKS! The writers were able to condense the epic first book into 75 minutes of powerful music, ingenious storytelling, high action and compelling and heartfelt characters. I’m looking forward to bringing the show to the stage with the same sort of bold theatricality that made last season’s production of THE HOBBIT shine so brightly. Though a book targeted at middle-schoolers, I think this is a show for the entire family!”

BIOGRAPHIES

Joe Tracz (Book) is the writer of Broadway’s BE MORE CHILL (with Joe Iconis) and POSTER BOY (with Craig Carnelia, Williamstown Theater Festival). TV/film work includes all three seasons of Netflix’s *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. Joe is an alumnus of the Ars Nova Play Group, a former Playwrights Realm writing fellow and for THE LIGHTNING THIEF, a Drama Desk nominee for Best Book. He has a BA from Kalamazoo College and an MFA from NYU Tisch.

Rob Rokicki (Music, Lyrics, Orchestrations) is a songwriter, performer and educator. His shows have been nominated for three Drama Desks and a Lortel Award. Projects: STRANGE TAILS (Ars Nova ANT Fest); RELATIVITY (USC) with Michael Ruby and the graphic novel rock musical, MONSTERSONGS (NAMT ’18). Larson Award finalist and alum of the BMI writing workshop. Thanks to TWUSA, Iconis, Flynnie, Abrams and all the artists who’ve contributed to the development of this show. BFA, BA University of Michigan. Albums available on Broadway Records. robokicki.com @rrokicks

Jeff Frank (Artistic Director/Director) is recognized as one of the top directors in the field with an expertise in developing new work for the theater for young audiences. He holds a BFA in Theater from the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater and an MFA in Child Drama from the University of Utah. Having served as First Stage’s Education and Academy Director from 1996 – 2003, Jeff remains committed to the power of theater to transform lives and forever thankful to call First Stage home. Some of his favorite shows include: MATILDA, THE MUSICAL; A MIDNIGHT CRY; LUCHADORA and GRETEL! Much love to his wife and children, who provide constant support and inspiration.

Tim Rebers (Music Director) is a multidisciplinary performer, director, composer, conductor and teacher throughout the greater Milwaukee area. Previous work with First Stage Theater Academy: Music Director for KISS ME KATE, HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL JR., MOANA JR. and 13 (MD and director). He conducted and music directed INTO THE WOODS and directed PUFFS at Menomonee Fall High School. At Wisconsin Lutheran College, he was MD for QUILTERS, YOU’RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN, SHE LOVES ME and THE

TEMPEST (which he also composed). Most recently at WLC, he was Director and MD for PETER AND THE STARCATCHER. In October, he also conducted and directed a concert of music from PRINCE OF EGYPT at Congregation Beth Israel Ner Tamid. Previous work includes music arrangements for Milwaukee Opera Theatre's *Impossible Operas*, and performing, music directing, conducting, arranging and reorchestrating *Ruddigore* at Skylight/MOT in 2020. Tim also performs frequently in musicals, operas, plays, concerts and cabarets at companies throughout the area. He's also artistic director of Brew City Opera and music arranger and performer in Tenors MKE.

Ami Majeskie (Choreographer) is a Milwaukee area choreographer and director. Ami also served as a touring repertory actor, director, choreographer and playwright for Kohl's Wild Theater. Past choreography credits include: A CHRISTMAS STORY, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, MEAN GIRLS, THE LIGHTNING THIEF, LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER: THE MUSICAL™, CINDERELLA, SISTER ACT, CATCH ME IF YOU CAN, SONGS FOR A NEW WORLD, ANYTHING GOES, CHICAGO, RENT, ALADDIN, PARADE, ASSASSINS, ADDAMS FAMILY, DOGFIGHT, INTO THE WOODS, LITTLE MERMAID and 1776. Past directing credits include: THE PROM, FINDING NEMO, RENT, MATILDA, MARY POPPINS, MAMMA MIA, URINETOWN, YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN, FIRST DATE, ADDAMS FAMILY, SHREK, MOANA and DOGFIGHT. She will also be directing and choreographing BEAUTY AND THE BEAST at Greendale this summer.

ADULT CAST

Austin Nelson, Jr. (Luke/Young Luke/Ensemble); **Nadja Simmonds*** (Sally Jackson/Mrs. Dodds/The Oracle/Aunty Em aka Medusa/Chimera/Ensemble); **Jamey Feshold** (Mr. Dionysus aka Mr. D/Gabe/Ares/Minotaur/Charon/Uncle Ferdinand Statue/Ensemble) and **Matt Daniels*** (Mr. Brunner/Chiron/Poseidon/Hades/Kronos/Cyclops/Bus Driver/Uber Driver/Ensemble).

Understudies: **King Hang** (Understudy for Austin Nelson, Jr.); **Brielle Richmond** (Understudy for Nadja Simmonds); **Thomas Cauley** (Understudy for Jamey Feshold) and **Jake Hortsmeier** (Understudy for Matt Daniels).

*Appearing through an Agreement between First Stage and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

YOUNG PERFORMER CASTS

Young Performer roles are double cast. Young Performers in the **Minotaur Cast** include: **Ben Nowacek** (Wauwatosa) as Percy Jackson; **Sanaiah Hibbler** (Oak Creek) as Annabeth; **Thatcher Jacobs** (Fox Point) as Grover; **Annie Sturtz** (Waukesha) as Clarisse; **Ginger Mai Foster** (Menomonee Falls) as Ensemble/Fury/Bianca and **Callee Tamblingson** (Cedarburg) as Ensemble/Fury/Thalia.

Young Performers in the **Chimera Cast** include: **Silver Anderson** (Milwaukee) as Percy Jackson; **Calleigh Mills** (Hartland) as Annabeth; **Abram Nelson** (Whitefish Bay) as Grover; **Isabella Schmitz** (Port Washington) as Clarisse; **Ceci Cornell** (Elm Grove) as Ensemble/Fury/Bianca and **Evie Patrick** (Whitefish Bay) as Ensemble/Fury/Thalia.

Please note: To find which cast is performing on a specific performance date and time, please refer to the website on the show page located here: [THE LIGHTNING THIEF: The Percy Jackson Musical](#).

The Artistic and Creative Team for **THE LIGHTNING THIEF: The Percy Jackson Musical** includes: **Jeff Frank** (Artistic Director/Director); **Tim Rebers** (Music Director); **Ami Majeskie** (Choreographer); **Madelyn Yee** (Scenic Designer); **Yvonne Miranda, USA** (Costume Designer); **Maaz Ahmed** (Lighting Designer); **Sarah Ramos** (Sound Designer); **Nikki Kulas** (Puppet Designer); **Matt Daniels*** (Movement Director); **Jamey Feshold** (Fight Director); **Bree Kazinski** (Fight Director Fellow); **Kelly L. Schwartz*** (Production Stage Manager) and **Carrie Johns** (Assistant Stage Manager).

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Tickets start at \$20 – Tickets may be purchased at firststage.org or through the Marcus Center Box Office, in person at 929 N. Water Street in downtown Milwaukee or by phone (414) 273-7206 or toll free at (888) 612-3500. The number for TDD (for deaf and hard of hearing patrons) is (414) 273-3080.

Security at the Marcus Performing Arts Center: Upon entry to the Todd Wehr Theater, attendees will walk through a security scanner to check for any items not permitted in the building. While purses and small bags are allowed, please leave larger bags, backpacks or other items at home. [Review Security Procedures at the Marcus Performing Arts Center](#). Please allow ample time for parking and security checks before the performance.

Digital Playbill: The digital playbill includes artistic/actor/designer and cast bios. To view the digital playbill when it gets posted closer to the show opening, please go to: firststage.org/about-us/media-center/playbills/

Please note: Please refer to the digital playbill for updates on any cast changes as well as for the appropriate pronouns for actors.

Enrichment Guide: An Enrichment Guide for the production will get posted here: [THE LIGHTNING THIEF: The Percy Jackson Musical](#).

Group Sales: Groups of 10 or more receive 15% off single ticket prices on most First Stage performances at the Marcus Center's Todd Wehr Theater. Call **(414) 267-2961** or email ticketmanager@firststage.org for more information.

Special events for THE LIGHTNING THIEF: The Percy Jackson Musical

Tech Talk: Sunday, February 4, 2024 following the 3:30 p.m. performance

Stick around following select performances for First Stage Tech Talks, an extended talkback featuring special guests to give audiences a glimpse at the behind-the-scenes magic of First Stage productions. This Tech Tack will feature special guest Lighting Designer **Maaz Ahmed**.

Pay What You Choose Performance: Friday, February 9, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Pay What You Choose tickets are available on a first come, first served basis with a minimum suggested ticket price of \$10 per person. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. on the day of the performance. Patrons are encouraged to arrive early. Tickets may also be reserved in advance by phone at **(414) 267-2961**, weekdays 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. For more information, please visit: firststage.org/events-tickets/tickets-offers/pay-what-you-choose/.

Sensory Friendly Performance: Saturday, February 17, 2024 at 3:30 p.m.

A Sensory Friendly Performance with accommodations for families with children on the autism spectrum will take place on Saturday, February 17, 2024 at 3:30 p.m. Sensory accommodations include a quiet area staffed by an experienced educator, adjusted sound and lighting, and more. Tickets for Sensory Friendly Performances are \$10. Order online or by phone at **(414) 267-2961**, weekdays 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. to reserve tickets. To learn more visit: firststage.org/plan-your-visit/sensory-friendly-performances/.

ASL Interpreted Performance: Sunday, March 3, 2024 at 3:30 p.m.

This performance will be sign language interpreted for patrons who are deaf or hard of hearing. Assistive listening devices are also available at the Todd Wehr Theater. To learn more, please visit: firststage.org/plan-your-visit/accessibility/sign-language-interpreted-performances/

FACT SHEET

Title: THE LIGHTNING THIEF: The Percy Jackson Musical

Book by **Joe Tracz**

Music & Lyrics by **Rob Rokicki**

Adapted from the book *The Lightning Thief* by **Rick Riordan**

THE LIGHTNING THIEF is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals. www.concordtheatricals.com

Directed by **Jeff Frank**

Sponsored by **Molitor Foundation**

Location: Marcus Center's Todd Wehr Theater, 929 N. Water Street, Milwaukee

Performances: February 3 – March 10, 2024

Description: As a son of Poseidon, Percy Jackson has newly discovered powers he can't control, monsters on his trail and is on a quest to find Zeus' lightning bolt to prevent a war between the Greek gods. Featuring a thrilling original rock score, this musical adaptation of the *New York Times* bestseller is an action-packed, mythical adventure for Percy fans of all ages! *Performance runtime is approximately 75 minutes, which includes a brief intermission. Suggested for adults, teens and children ages 7 – 9 and 10 – 12.*

Performances:

- Saturday, February 3 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *OPENING PERFORMANCES*
- Sunday, February 4 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *TECH TALK FOLLOWING 3:30 PERFORMANCE*
- Friday, February 9 at 7:00 p.m. – *PAY WHAT YOU CHOOSE PERFORMANCE*
- Saturday, February 10 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, February 11 at 1:00 p.m.
- Friday, February 16 at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, February 17 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *SENSORY FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE AT 3:30 P.M.*
- Sunday, February 18 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Friday, February 23 at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, February 24 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, February 25 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Friday, March 1 at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, March 2 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, March 3 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *ASL PERFORMANCE AT 3:30 P.M.*
- Saturday, March 9 at 1 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. – *ADDED PERFORMANCES*
- Sunday, March 10 at 1 p.m. – *ADDED PERFORMANCE*

For more information, please visit firststage.org or call (414) 267-2961.

About First Stage

Founded in 1987, First Stage is one of the nation's leading theaters for young people and families, and a driving force behind the creation of the best and most innovative plays for family audiences, theater training programs for young people and education initiatives for its schools and community.

First Stage produces plays that honor the young person's point of view, include diverse and traditionally underrepresented voices and inspire meaningful conversations. First Stage has presented more than 70 world premiere productions that address important subject matters relevant to today's youth. The Theater Academy is one of the nation's largest high-impact theater training programs for young people (3-18 years old). Through a challenging curriculum taught by professional teaching artists, the Academy nurtures life skills through stage skills and

includes the Next Steps Program that tailors Theater Academy classes to the needs of autistic young people. As Wisconsin's leader in arts-integrated education in schools, First Stage's dynamic Theater in Education Programs cleverly blend theater activities with standard curriculum – allowing more than 10,000 students annually to learn traditional academic subjects through creativity and self-expression.

First Stage ensures that all programming is not only accessible to its community but that it is reflective of the community it serves. In order to do that, First Stage relies on its community of donors. With an annual operating budget of \$5 million, more than half of First Stage's revenue comes from generous contributions from individuals, corporations, foundations, government sources and the United Performing Arts Fund. Join First Stage's community of donors with [a contribution today](#) and transform lives through theater.

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