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**Amplify – First Stage’s BIPOC Virtual Short Play Series
kicks off with**

COPPER HORNS IN WATER

-Virtual production developed in partnership with Indian Community School-

Milwaukee, WI – April 7, 2021 – First Stage will kick off its inaugural Amplify – BIPOC Virtual Short Plays Series with **COPPER HORNS IN WATER** by **Ty Defoe**, writer, interdisciplinary artist, First Stage alum and ICS alumni, and directed by **Johamy Morales**, Director of Education at Seattle Children’s Theatre and Trustee for Theatre Communication Group (TCG). Based on Anishinaabe storytelling traditions, this is a story about North, a curious underwater creature who is unsure they are ready for their Copper Horns. North soon learns the importance of their horns when they need to summon their strength – and with the collective power of their friends – to save the day. **COPPER HORNS IN WATER**, featuring 12 students from Indian Community School and actress and ICS alumni **Marisa Carr**, is a fun-filled story for the entire family. *Recommended for families with young people ages 8+. Approximate running time is 15 minutes.*

First Stage developed this new series to offer virtual short plays created by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) playwrights that center on the young person’s point of view, amplifying the voices of these artists and young people throughout the Milwaukee community. The organization has had a long history of age-appropriate casting and of centering its work on the young person’s point of view. Understanding the power of connection that young people feel when they see themselves and their stories on stage, First Stage is excited to begin this series featuring newly commissioned work from BIPOC playwrights and directors.

COPPER HORNS IN WATER streams **April 16 – May 16, 2021**. Each play in the AMPLIFY series will be available on the First Stage YouTube channel. Audience members are encouraged to register to receive the link to each play prior to its premiere. While making a donation is not required for streaming access, all gifts received will help to support the artists involved in the

Amplify series and First Stage's commitment to building an inclusive community. To learn more and to register, please go to:

<https://www.firststage.org/amplify>

Artistic Director **Jeff Frank** shared: "I'm excited about the Amplify series, because we recognize that our young audiences connect more deeply to our productions when they see other young people on stage – when they see their lives represented in the stories we tell. Because we see the power in that connection, it is imperative that we continue to advance our efforts to ensure that as theater artists all of our programming is reflective of our community – through the stories we share and the programs we implement – and the teams we assemble to bring those stories and programs to life – and that we hear from and listen to the varied voices that make up this community."

BIOGRAPHIES

Ty Defoe (Giizhig) (Playwright), is from the Oneida and Ojibwe Nations. He is a Grammy Award-winning composer, playwright, librettist, interdisciplinary artist, actor, choreographer, eagle and hoop dancer. Ty interweaves artistic projects with social justice, indigeneity, trans rights, Indigi-Queering and environmentalism. Ty's international arts highlights: the Millennium celebration in Cairo, Egypt; International Music Festival in Ankara, Turkey and Festival of World Cultures in Dubai. Awards, residencies and fellowships: TransLab Fellow, Global Indigenous Heritage Festival Award, Robert Rauschenberg Artist in Residence, Jonathan Larson Award, Cordillera International Film Festival Finalist, 2021 Cultural Capital Fellow, Eugene O'Neill Theater Center finalist and the ASCAP Musical Theater Workshop. Works: *TransWorld*, *Red Pine*, *The Way They Lived*, *Ajijaak on Turtle Island*, *Hear Me Say My Name*, *Hart Island Requiem*, *Clouds are Pillows for the Moon*, *Wind Changes Direction*, *Before the Land Eroded*, *BasketBall Is 'War, Minus the Shooting' In Sectarian Lebanon*, *River of Stone*, *Firebird Tattoo*, *Trial and Tears* (with Dawn Avery) and *The Lesson* (with Nolan Doran and Avi Amon). Ty's songs have been featured at: Lincoln Center, Joe's Pub, Ars Nova, 54 Below, The Kennedy Center, among others. Ty's work can be viewed at theatrical venues including: Guthrie Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Yale Institute of Musical Theater, The Drama League Workshop, Lied Center for Performing Arts, NE, La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, Noor Theater, Native Voices at the Autry, The New Victory Theater, NY, Discovery World Theater, D.C., BRIC Media Arts Lab, Hasimta Theater in Old Jaffa and the Studebaker Theater in Chicago, IL for the International Puppet Festival. Ty is an artEquity facilitator, co-founder of Indigenous Direction (with Larissa FastHorse), and member of All My Relations Collective, which recently presented their work *GIZHIBAA GIIZHIG | Revolving Sky* at Under the Radar Festival's Incoming! at The Public Theater as part of the Devised Theater Working Group in New York City. He has published in: *Casting a Movement: The Welcome Table Initiative*, Routledge Press, *The Pitkin Review*, *Thorny Locust Magazine*, *Howl Round*, *Step Forward*, *SDC Spring Journal* and most recently published, *Firebird Tattoo* in *The Methuen Drama Book of Trans Plays, 2021*. Degrees from CalArts, Goddard College and Musical Theater Writing at NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Movement Direction: *Mother Road*, Dir. Bill Rauch (OSF), *Manahatta*, Dir. Laurie Woolery (OSF, Yale Rep) and

Choreographer for Tracy Lett's *The Minutes* (Broadway). Netflix: *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* and made his Broadway debut in Young Jean Lee's *Straight White Men*, Dir. Anna Shapiro. Lives in NYC + loves the color clear. Member of: SDC, ASCAP, Dramatist Guild, First Nations Theater Guild and AEA. Pronouns: He | We | www.tydefoe.com

Johamy Morales (Director) (she/her) has over eighteen years of experience in education, directing, community engagement, new work development and working in the performing arts. Johamy currently serves as the Director of Education at Seattle Children's Theatre (SCT) and as a Trustee for Theatre Communication Group (TCG). In addition she has served as an advisory council for the Colorado Creative Industries, Reimagine: New Plays in TYA, TCG's Rising Leaders of Color and TCG's Education Conference. Prior to working with SCT, Johamy served as the Education Director for Creede Repertory Theatre in Creede, Colorado and directed the Comparative Arts Department and the Junior Musical Theatre Program at Interlochen Center for the Arts in Interlochen, Michigan. Johamy has worked with Arena Stage and La Jolla Playhouse through their education programs as a teaching artist. Johamy is an alumnus of the Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship at Arena Stage and the British American Drama Academy in Oxford, England, where she studied Contemporary & Classical works. Johamy toured with the cast of *New World Jukebox* where she performed in the 2006 Grahamstown National Arts Festival, in Grahamstown, South Africa and with San Diego State University in, *Carnaval de Calaveras*, with performances in Oaxaca, Veracruz and Mexico D.F. in 2004. In February of 2017, Johamy collaborated with the US State Department, the US Embassy & Consulate and several NGO's to promote awareness of domestic and gender violence in Kolkata and Ranchi, India. As an educator, artist and director Johamy has worked with various schools and nonprofit organizations both nationally and internationally including Theatre for Young Audiences/USA, American Alliance for Education & Theatre, Write Now: TYA New Work Festival by Child's Play, First Stage, Hope College, Fort Lewis College, University of San Diego, Esperanza Charter School, Wexner Center, Denno's Museum, Students in Transition Empowerment Program and Columbus Refugee & Immigration Services. Johamy Morales holds an MFA in acting from The Ohio State University, with a specialization in outreach and devising new work, and a BA in Theatre from San Diego State University.

Jeff Frank (Artistic Director) is recognized as one of the top directors in the field with an expertise in developing new work for 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 and as First Stage's Artistic Director since February 2003, Jeff remains committed to the power of theater to transform lives and is forever thankful to call First Stage home.

COPPER HORNS IN WATER features Indian Community School Student Actors: **Asia** as North; **Caylee** as Ensemble; **Daisy** as Ensemble; **Jayson** as Rhys; **Maribel Collazo** as West; **Mary** as Ensemble; **Myra** as South; **Nolan** as Ensemble; **Noah** as Ensemble; **Tessa** as East and **Sophia** as Frys.

COPPER HORNS IN WATER also features Indian Community School alumni actor **Marisa Carr** as Unc-Aunt Boo-Boo.

The Artistic Staff for COPPER HORNS IN WATER features Includes: **Johamy Morales** (Director); **Mendi** (Assistant Director); **Siobhan Marks, Mrs. Dropik, Ms. Ellie, Ms. Scott** and **Mrs. Weishan** (Teacher Assistants); **Lux Haac** (Costume Coordinator and Illustrator); **Natalie Mayo** (Sound Designer); **Jeff Frank** and **Coltyn Giltner** (Video Crew); **J.T. Backes** (Editing); **Danielle Jordan** (Costume Craft Artisan); **Jenny Thurnau** (Costume Shop Manager); **Nikki Kulas** (Properties Master) and **Melissa L. Wanke**, Member of Actors' Equity Association, (Virtual Production Coordinator).

For the COPPER HORNS IN WATER Companion Enrichment Guide, please visit:

https://www.firststage.org/Documents/First Stage PDFs/2020-2021 season/CopperHorns_EnrichmentGuide.pdf

For visuals for COPPER HORNS IN WATER including headshots, show logo and trailer, please visit:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1N71YEWijyPkiYHhvJeDbps99_rzb_OBH?usp=sharing

The schedule for **Amplify – First Stage's BIPOC Virtual Short Play Series** is:

COPPER HORNS IN WATER

By [Ty Defoe](#)

Directed by *Johamy Morales*

Streaming April 16 – May 16, 2021

Description: North is a curious underwater creature who has earned their Copper Horns, a coming-of-age ritual that gives these young creatures power under water. North will soon learn the importance of their horns when they need to summon their strength – and with the collective power of their friends – to save the day. Based on Anishinaabe storytelling tradition, tune in as students from Indian Community School perform this fun-filled story for the entire family. *Recommended for families with young people ages 8+.*

Talkback: An extended talkback will stream on the First Stage Facebook page on **Friday, April 16 at 7:30 p.m.** following the premiere of COPPER HORNS IN WATER. The talkback will be facilitated by Artistic Director **Jeff Frank** and will feature playwright **Ty Defoe** and director **Johamy Morales**.

UNMUTED

By [Alvaro Saar Rios](#)

Music and Lyrics by [Deborah Wicks La Puma](#)

Directed by [Anna Skidis Vargas](#)

Streaming April 30 – May 30, 2021

Description: When the substitute gym teacher is kicked out of the Zoom Room of a virtual gym class, the students take over! As the group starts a game of “SorD” (Secret or Dare), they discover more about each other’s lives on the other side of the screen – their frustrations with online school, their love for tacos on Tuesdays and, most importantly, what they miss. Performed in English with some Spanish lyrics, unmute your streaming device for this lively new musical, to which we all can relate. *Recommended for families with young people ages 10+.*

Title To Be Announced

By [Nikkole Salter](#)

Directed by *Samantha Montgomery*

Streaming Fall 2021 (Please note: this virtual play was originally scheduled for May 20 – June 21, 2021. Stay tuned for new streaming dates in Fall 2021, as part of the 2021/22 season’s Amplify Series.)

For any additional questions, please 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). www.firststage.org.

About Indian Community School

Indian Community School, Inc. (ICS) is a private faith-based intertribal school of American Indian children from 4-year-old kindergarten through 8th grade. They have been serving the Native community of metro Milwaukee for over 50 years. ICS provides its students a unique learning experience. The mission of the Indian Community School is to cultivate an enduring cultural

identity and critical thinking by weaving indigenous teachings with a distinguished learning environment. ICS imparts cultural identity and academic excellence which will light the path forward for their students to sustain their rich legacy. ics-edu.org