



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Cindy Moran, PR Consultant, cmoran@firststage.org or (414) 405-6290

Kelly Gerlach, Director of Advancement, kgerlach@firststage.org or (414) 267-2938

MEDIA ALERT

Name of Event: First Stage's 2023/24 **Amplify Reading Series** season concludes with a play reading of **EMILY SONG AND THE QUEEN OF THE NIGHT** by Playwright and Composer **Marcus Yi** and directed by First Stage Associate Artistic Director **Michelle LoRizzo**.

Date, Time & Location: Wednesday, April 24 at 7:00 p.m.

[Milwaukee Youth Arts Center](#)

325 W. Walnut Street; Milwaukee, WI 53212

Play Description: Since her mother's death, Emily Song's home has always been a musical vacuum. Her father banned music from their lives for as long as she can remember. But that doesn't stop Emily from secretly taking singing lessons online. On her 12th birthday, Emily's powers manifest and she discovers she is a music mage: a sorcerer who can cast magical spells through music. When her father is kidnapped by a mysterious entity known as the Queen of Shadows, Emily must figure out how to use her newly discovered talent to save her dad and New York City from total destruction. *Suggested for adults, teens and children ages 7 – 9 and 10 – 12.* Sponsored by **Molitor Foundation**.

Amplify Reading Series description: The fourth season of First Stage's Amplify Reading Series began with a play reading of **BIG CITY HARMONY** by Ty Defoe. The second offering in the series was **ESPERANZA RISING** by First Stage Playwright in Residence **Alvaro Saar Rios** and composer **Dinorah Marquez**. This final play reading in the series will be **EMILY SONG AND THE QUEEN OF THE NIGHT** by playwright/composer **Marcus Yi**. The Amplify Reading Series is in support of First Stage's ongoing commitment to the development of new work, with an intentional focus on lifting voices of diverse playwrights and artists. To learn more about Amplify, please visit: [2023/24 Amplify Reading Series](#).

This reading is also part of the **TYA BIPOC Superhero Project**, a new initiative led by playwright and educator **José Casas**, designed to give playwrights of color more access to mainstream/regional [Theatre for Young Audiences/USA](#) (TYA/USA) theatres. In an effort the TYA/USA is calling the largest and most comprehensive partnership of theatres ever undertaken in the field, 20 playwrights of color will be commissioned by 24 theatres to develop their work in a one-week residency. All the commissioned works will feature stories of BIPOC superheroes, and the project will culminate in a year-long celebration with productions, co-productions and a published anthology of all the plays. First Stage is honored to serve as a commissioning theater and overjoyed to be working with playwright/composer **Marcus Yi**.

Cost: This new play reading will be a [Pay What You Choose](#) event held at the **Milwaukee Youth Arts Center**. Doors will open approximately one hour prior to each reading. A minimum suggested ticket price is \$10, but attendees may pay any amount they choose. Patrons are encouraged to arrive early and may pre-order tickets by phone at **(414) 267-2961**. [Learn more.](#)

Additional information: 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.

First Stage Artistic Director **Jeff Frank** shared some additional thoughts on this year's Amplify Reading Series: "As we continue to expand our efforts to lift the voices of underrepresented playwrights and stories, it is especially exciting to me that all three Amplify readings this season have featured strong, young female protagonists. Our first Amplify offering, **BIG CITY HARMONY**, showed how Harmony navigated the transition from the reservation and the only life she had known to the big city of Milwaukee where she discovered her voice, her heritage and her destiny. Similarly, **Esperanza** was uprooted from her life and traveled on a journey where she discovered a new depth of understanding of herself, her family and her world. Finally, **Emily Song** discovers her true power on her 12th birthday and uses her musical, magical powers to save the world. Collectively, we are so excited to hear feedback from our audiences on these new world premieres in process – two of which are slated to be part of our 2024/25 season at First Stage."

Website: firststage.org

Phone: (414) 267-2961

###

About Marcus Yi

Marcus Yi is an award-winning theater writer/composer/director and performer based in New York. Marcus was an inaugural member of the 92nd Street Y Musical Theater Development Lab Collective, a 2021/22 New Victory LabWorks Artist and a Resident Artist with the American Lyric Theater. He has been commissioned by The Kennedy Center, Queens Council on the Arts, American Lyric Theater, Atlanta Opera, Really Spicy Opera and First Stage.

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