



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Uplifting world premiere production
DREAM, QUICKIE! DREAM!
opens at Marcus Performing Arts Center's
Todd Wehr Theater this October

-Inspired by the life of Donald Driver and celebrating the idea to dream big-

Milwaukee, WI – September 7, 2023 – First Stage kicks off its 2023/24 season with the world premiere production **DREAM, QUICKIE! DREAM!**, a story for all ages inspired by the life of **Donald “Quickie” Driver**, written by playwright **Gloria Bond Clunie** and directed by popular Milwaukee actor/producer/director **Dimonte Henning**. In the play we find Donald, a champion football player on the Green Bay Packers, is a new dad! He is tired, frightened, frazzled and desperate to survive the night with a crying baby who refuses to sleep. As the night wears on, his younger self, Quickie, comes to his rescue! Together, they journey through childhood memories, sharing stories inspired by Quickie’s life to soothe his new son and help them all rediscover how to dream big. **DREAM, QUICKIE! DREAM!** is a co-commission between **First Stage** and **Marcus Performing Arts Center (MPAC)** and is an outgrowth of the **MPAC Cultural Ambassador** program and partnership with **Donald Driver**. Sponsored by **Associated Bank** and **Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren s.c.**

DREAM, QUICKIE! DREAM! runs **October 6 – 29, 2023** 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.*

Kevin Giglinto, Marcus Performing Arts Center’s President and CEO had this to say about the project: “The commissioning of DREAM, QUICKIE! DREAM! is a direct outcome stemming from MPAC’s Cultural Ambassador program and partnership with Packers’ legend Donald Driver. As we start our third year together with Donald as our Cultural Ambassador, we’re thrilled to be working with First Stage to bring *Quickie* to life in this world premiere production. This collaboration demonstrates the value and impact of two leading arts organizations partnering to create an original performance with the power to connect with all audiences. We can’t wait to see DREAM, QUICKIE! DREAM! when it opens in our Todd Wehr Theater on October 6!”

From Director **Dimonte Henning**, “DREAM, QUICKIE! DREAM! reinforces the idea that dreaming big coupled with hard work, always pays off. Donald Driver’s passion for football and his dedication to hard work allowed him to dream big and see a life much greater than the challenges of his upbringing. What I love about this play is it gives license for young people to dream big, work hard for their dreams and believe they are greater than their current circumstances. The upbeat music and fast-paced “football-style” choreography is an extension of this idea through the many lessons Quickie learns throughout the play. I can’t wait to share this inspiring story and for audiences to immerse themselves in this wonderful play this fall.”

Added First Stage Artistic Director **Jeff Frank**: “Though his football career has ended, Donald Driver continues to be an inspiration for so many around the country and in our community. In 2021, Donald became the first-ever Cultural Ambassador for the Marcus Performing Arts Center – a wonderful fit given his passion for community engagement and the arts (marcuscenter.org/cultural-ambassador/). After that appointment, the Marcus Center arranged a meeting between First Stage and Mr. Driver, hoping to find a way to spread his message to an even bigger audience. I was immediately struck by his passion for young people and his hope that they can make a better future. His *Quickie* books were inspired by stories that he told his children in hopes of inspiring the values of hope, friendship, perseverance and hard work. It has been a joy to witness the collaboration between Mr. Driver and playwright Gloria Bond Clunie. Directed by Dimonte Henning, DREAM QUICKIE! DREAM! celebrates Donald Driver’s stories and proclaims the power and importance of our dreams. Whether you are a football fan or not, the show is super fun and inspiring – and certainly one for the whole family to share.”

BIOGRAPHIES

Donald Driver (Author) Super Bowl Champion Donald Driver is the All-Time Leading Receiver in Green Bay Packers history for career yards and career receptions. His NFL peers have recognized his accomplishments by voting him to four Pro Bowls. In addition to his on-field accomplishments, Donald is a JB award winner and Packers’ recipient for both the Walter Payton Man of the Year and the Ed Block Courage Award. In 2011, Donald was selected by the National Education Association to read his first book, *Quickie Makes the Team!*, at the Read Across America event hosted by First Lady Michelle Obama. His other children’s books include: *Quickie Goes to the Big Game*, *Quickie Handles a Loss* and *Quickie Stands up to a Bully*.

Donald still answers to his childhood nickname “Quickie.” The name recognizes his compact size and fast moves that have served him well both growing up and as a wide receiver in the National Football League. Donald has beaten the odds time and time again. Growing up, his small size was not his only challenge. Donald was also homeless for part of his childhood. He overcame all obstacles to attend Acord Stage University and beat the odds again to make it to the NFL. Donald rose to stardom after being selected by the Packers in the last round of the 1999 draft. In 2000, Donald and his wife Betina created the Donald Driver Foundation with the motto, “Strong Hands, Strong Minds, Loving Hearts.” The foundation provides assistance to the homeless, scholarships for underprivileged children and supports numerous charities in the family’s home states of Texas, Mississippi and Wisconsin. Although he has garnered numerous personal awards and recognitions (*Dancing with the Stars*, Season 14), Donald would rather be remembered for his undying support of others and encouragement to pursue one’s dreams. Donald and Betina are proud parents to Cristian, Christina and Charity.

Gloria Bond Clunie (Playwright) is an award-winning playwright, director and educator. Ms. Clunie is a founding member of the Playwriting Ensemble at Chicago’s Regional Tony Award-winning Victory Gardens Theater where her plays NORTH STAR, LIVING GREEN and SHOES premiered. She is also the founding Artistic Director of Evanston’s Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre where she directed scores of productions including AIN’T MISBEHAVIN, CEREMONIES IN DARK OLD MEN, HOME and RAISIN. Other plays include SWEET WATER TASTE, SMOKE, SING, MALINDY, SING!, BLU, BUCK NAKED and DRIP, among others. She is published by Dramatic Publishing and in the anthologies *Seven Black Plays*, *Reimagining A Raisin In the Sun* and *The Bully Plays*. Her plays have been produced and workshopped in a variety of theaters including Victory Gardens Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre, ETA and Alliance Theatre, among many others. Ms. Clunie has been recognized for her work in theater and education by the NAACP, AKA and DST Sororities, American Alliance for Theatre and Education and the Vision Keepers. Awards include a Chicago Jeff, a Children’s Theater Foundation of America Orlin Corey Medallion, a Scott McPherson, a Dramatists Guild Fellowship, Theodore Ward African-American Playwriting Prizes, New York’s New Professional Theater Award, Chicago Black Theatre Alliance Awards, NEA and Illinois Arts Council Fellowships, the Evanston Mayor’s Award for the Arts and the 2018 YWCA YWomen Leadership Award This Northwestern graduate (B.A. Theater, MFA-Directing) is honored her drama SHOES was included in the 2015 Women Playwrights International Conference in Cape Town, South Africa. In January 2018, she served as both playwright and director for MY WONDERFUL BIRTHDAY SUIT commissioned by Chicago Children’s Theatre, while her adaptation of THE LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET (2016 Caldecott/2016 Newbery/2016 Coretta Scott King Book Awards) premiered in November at Children’s Theatre of Charlotte, went to Dallas Children’s Theatre and Bay Area Children’s Theatre in 2020 and performed at Milwaukee’s First Stage in 2022. Originally from Henderson, North Carolina, she and her husband Basil live in Evanston, Illinois and are the proud parents of Aurelia, an amazing theater artist and daughter.

Dimonte Henning (Director) is grateful to be back at First Stage and to direct the world premiere of DREAM, QUICKIE! DREAM! Dimonte is an actor, director and theater producer. He received his formal theater training from UW-Milwaukee with additional training from

Milwaukee Rep's Emerging Professional Residency. He is a Founding Member of the Milwaukee Black Theater Festival and performing arts organization, Lights! Camera! Soul! His favorite directing credits include: THE COLORED MUSEUM, BLACK NATIVITY, THE NICETIES and PRETTY FIRE. Dimonte's national regional theater credits include: SEVEN GUITARS (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park); TONI STONE (Alliance Theatre); STICK FLY (Writers Theatre); THE ISLAND and DEATHTRAP (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre); SKELETON CREW (Forward Theater Company); OUR TOWN, A CHRISTMAS CAROL and DREAMGIRLS (Milwaukee Repertory Theater) and THE WIZ and THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN (First Stage). Dimonte has several TV and commercial credits including: Guest starring roles on NBC's *Chicago PD* (Seasons 4 and 6), Disney's *Encore!*, WI Lottery, UBER, Inpro Designs and Harley-Davidson.

ADULT CAST

Denzel Taylor* (Daddy (Donald)/Coach); **Patrice Hood** (Quickie's Mom/Mama/Ms. Faye) and **Allen Dennis Edge*** (Mr. Peters/Donald's Dad).

*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 **Lambeau Cast** include: **Caiden Chambers** (Milwaukee) as Quickie; **Reece Davis** (Milwaukee) as Marvin; **Shaun Brown** (West Bend) as Billy; **Marcia Olson** (Milwaukee) as Christina; **Amilia Rosado-White** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble; **Mi'Yanna Boone** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble; **Christian Williams-Henning** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble and **Messiah Johns** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble.

Young Performers in the **Lombardi Cast** include: **Tiago Patterson** (Milwaukee) as Quickie; **Caleb Hoze** (Milwaukee) as Marvin; **Quinn Sison** (Franklin) as Billy; **Sivan Wallace** (Mequon) as Christina; **Rocco Onorato** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble; **Jaliyah Drake** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble; **Gabby Donovan** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble and **Jetziel Soler** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble.

Please note: To find which cast is performing on a specific performance day, please refer to the website on the show page located here: firststage.org/events-tickets/2023-24-season/dream-quickie-dream/

The Creative Team for **DREAM, QUICKIE! DREAM!** includes: **Dimonte Henning** (Director); **Martin McClendon** (Scenic Designer); **Trinae Williams-Henning** (Costume Designer); **Jason Fassel, USA** (Lighting Designer); **Antoine Reynolds** (Sound Designer); **Christopher Gilbert** (Movement Choreographer); **Lonnae Hickman** (Puppet Designer and Builder) and **Kelly L. Schwartz*** (Production Stage Manager) and **Lauren Westfahl** (Assistant Stage Manager).

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

Tickets start at \$20 – Tickets may be purchased at [firststage.org](https://www.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/](https://www.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: [firststage.org/events-tickets/2023-24-season/dream-quickie-dream/](https://www.firststage.org/events-tickets/2023-24-season/dream-quickie-dream/)

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) 267-2964** or email groups@firststage.org for more information.

Special events for DREAM, QUICKIE! DREAM!

Pay What You Choose Performance: Friday, October 13, 2023 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/](https://www.firststage.org/events-tickets/tickets-offers/pay-what-you-choose/) This Pay What You Choose Performance is sponsored by First Stage's Inclusion & Accessibility Partner, **Children's Wisconsin**.

Sensory Friendly Performance: Saturday, October 21, 2023 at 3:30 p.m.

A Sensory Friendly Performance with accommodations for families with children on the autism spectrum will take place on Saturday, October 21, 2023 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/](https://www.firststage.org/plan-your-visit/sensory-friendly-performances/).

ASL Interpreted Performance: Sunday, October 22, 2023 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: DREAM, QUICKIE! DREAM!

A story for all ages inspired by the Life of Donald “Quickie” Driver

By **Gloria Bond Clunie**

Co-Commissioned by **First Stage** and the **Marcus Performing Arts Center**

Directed by **Dimonte Henning**

Sponsored by Associated Bank and Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren s.c.

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

Live Performances: October 6 – 29, 2023

Description: Donald, a champion football player on the Green Bay Packers is a new dad! He is tired, frightened, frazzled and desperate to survive the night with a crying baby who refuses to sleep. As the night wears on, his younger self, Quickie, comes to his rescue! Together, they journey through childhood memories, sharing stories inspired by Quickie’s life to soothe his new son and help them all rediscover how to dream big! *Performance runtime is approximately 75 minutes, which includes a brief intermission. Suggested for adults, teens and children ages 7-9 and 10-12.*

Performances:

- Friday, October 6 at 7:00 p.m. – *OPENING*
- Saturday, October 7 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, October 8 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Friday, October 13 at 7:00 p.m. – *PAY WHAT YOU CHOOSE PERFORMANCE*
- Saturday, October 14 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, October 15 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, October 21 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *SENSORY FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE AT 3:30 P.M.*
- Sunday, October 22 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *ASL PERFORMANCE AT 3:30 P.M.*
- Saturday, October 28 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, October 29 at 1:00 p.m.

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

About Marcus Performing Arts Center

A mission-based non-profit organization located in downtown Milwaukee, the Marcus Performing Arts Center (MPAC) brings high-quality arts and cultural programming to Southeastern Wisconsin. MPAC strives to act as an energizing force that connects the community to the world through collaboration, innovation, social engagement and the transformative power of the performing arts. Through multiple performance series, community events and educational experiences, MPAC brings a diverse range of celebrated artists to the region. A fixture in Milwaukee for over 50 years, MPAC is proud to be part of the Milwaukee Theater District as well as a dedicated War Memorial facility. Learn more at: marcuscenter.org