



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A New Play Adapted for Online Audiences
THE GIRL WHO SWALLOWED A CACTUS
(In Your Home)

-By Eric Coble-

Directed by Jeff Frank

Featuring Milwaukee actress and First Stage alumna Karen Estrada

Milwaukee, WI – October 20, 2020 – The second installment of First Stage’s 20/21 Virtual Season of Plays brings **THE GIRL WHO SWALLOWED A CACTUS (In Your Home)**, a new online, one-actor play, to family audiences. This new play, adapted for online audiences by Playwright **Eric Coble**, is an imaginative tour de force for Milwaukee actress **Karen Estrada**, last seen at First Stage as Scissors in **THE LEGEND OF ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS**, and who made her First Stage directorial debut with **ON THE WINGS OF A MARIPOSA** during the 2019/20 season. In this play, the singular actor shares the story of a group of friends who go on a wild adventure in the American Southwest after a well-dressed talking coyote steals an orange traffic cone from their junkyard summer fortress. **THE GIRL WHO SWALLOWED A CACTUS** is a funny and innovative play, rehearsed, performed and recorded virtually from Ms. Estrada’s own home. Sponsored by **Children’s Wisconsin**, with additional support from the **United Performing Arts Fund**.

THE GIRL WHO SWALLOWED A CACTUS streams **November 2 – 22, 2020**. Single Tickets are available for \$15, \$25 or \$40. Patrons are encouraged to choose the price point that best fits their family and budget. Ticket buyers will receive an access code to stream this performance through the streaming service Broadway On Demand. Single tickets can be purchased online at www.firststage.org/cactus or by phone at **(414) 267-2961**. *Suggested for families with young people ages 7 – 15+.*

New this year: **Family All-Access Pass Membership** includes streaming access to this and all other virtual productions this season and starts at \$200 per household. More information is available at www.firststage.org/membership.

“We remain committed to sharing the joy and spirit of community that comes uniquely from the shared experience of live theater, while also embracing the emerging digital platforms that so many of us have relied upon to continue engaging young people and families,” said **Jeff Frank**, First Stage artistic director, and director of the production. “Earlier this spring, we saw a delightful opportunity to pilot this one-person, online-only play, made available to us by popular playwright Eric Coble.” He also added, “It has been a blast working with Karen. She is always so inventive and engaging. I couldn’t have asked for a better actor to work with on this new adventure of rehearsing and ultimately recording virtually. We hope this play will provide a fun, engaging and unique experience for families from the comfort of their homes – and look for a guest appearance from Karen’s cat!”

To access production photos and a preview video, please visit

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1oAoW99Ob4vhHF0DfpmoGTyato2kdaywv?usp=sharing>

BIOGRAPHIES

Jeff Frank, (Director/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, Jeff 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.

ADULT ACTOR

Karen Estrada is an actor, director and educator who has made her artistic home in Milwaukee – a home whose foundation was laid by attending First Stage Theater Academy and performing in the Todd Wehr Theater as a teenager. As an adult, Karen has performed in a dozen productions with First Stage and is a lead teacher for First Stage’s Next Steps program. Karen has taught at many other schools of theater including MITY, Waukesha Civic, Sunset Playhouse and Next Act Theatre’s Next Actors program. As an actor, Karen has performed with Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, Next Act Theater, Skylight Music Theatre, Milwaukee Opera Theater, In Tandem Theatre and is a proud three-time alumna of the Disney on Classic tour of Japan and Taiwan. She has directed at Chamber Theater’s Young Playwrights Festival and Renaissance’s Brink Festival. Karen was last seen with First Stage in THE LEGEND OF ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS in March 2020.

The Artistic Staff for THE GIRL WHO SWALLOWED A CACTUS includes: **Jeff Frank** (Artistic Director/Director), **Jeff Schaetzke** (Director of Artistic Operations), **Jessica Noones** (Production Manager), **Nikki Kulas** (Properties Master) and **Melissa L. Wanke**, Member of Actors’ Equity Association, (Stage Manager).

For more information about any of the offerings for **Through Our Lens – A First Stage Virtual Performance Series** or about buying a Family All-Access Pass, please visit www.firststage.org or call **(414) 267-2961**. To see the schedule the 2020/21 Virtual Season of Plays, please visit: firststage.org/virtualseries2021.

FACT SHEET

About: THE GIRL WHO SWALLOWED A CACTUS (In Your Home)

A new play adapted for online audiences by Eric Coble

Dates: Streaming November 2 – 22, 2020

Description: School is out. Which is great except . . . there's nothing to do. Nothing. Sound familiar? And like you, Sheila and her friends are searching for something – anything – interesting to explore. So what obviously happens next? A walking, talking and surprisingly well-dressed coyote shows up and the kids find themselves on the adventure of a lifetime! Obviously! It's exciting! It's funny! It's magical! Families will love this brand new, original play by Broadway playwright Eric Coble, performed by one of First Stage's favorite superstars, Karen Estrada! This innovative, streamable production was made just for you! *Performance runtime is approximately 55 minutes. Suggested for families with young people ages 7 – 15+.*

Tickets and information: Single Tickets are available for \$15, \$25 or \$40. Patrons are encouraged to choose the price point that best fits their family and budget. Ticket buyers will receive an access code to stream this performance through the streaming service Broadway On Demand. Single tickets can be purchased online at www.firststage.org/cactus or by phone at **(414) 267-2961**. Family All-Access Pass memberships are also available.

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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.