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Contact Erica Davis (414) 267-2931 or edavis@firststage.org

FIRST STAGE ANNOUNCES ITS 2013-2014 SEASON

27th season includes Shrek the Musical, critically acclaimed A Midnight Cry, The Cat in the Hat, and two world premiere productions!

Milwaukee – First Stage announces its 27th season, featuring six Family Series productions to be performed at the Todd Wehr Theater in the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Milwaukee, one First Steps production – our interactive theater series geared towards children ages 3 to 6 – at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, and two fully-produced plays performed by the Young Company – First Stage Theater Academy’s advanced actor training program for high school students – performed at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center and Golda Meir School.

The season kicks off with a new Theatre for Young Audiences adaptation of SHREK THE MUSICAL, October 11 through November 17, 2013 at the Todd Wehr Theater in the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, 929 North Water Street, downtown Milwaukee. Based on the DreamWorks Animation motion picture and the book by William Steig, this fairy tale adventure will feature our own John Maclay as everyone’s favorite green ogre – Shrek! “It’s been an honor to work with writer David Lindsay-Abaire and composer Jeanine Tesori to shape this adaptation of Shrek created just for First Stage audiences,” said Artistic Director Jeff Frank. “It will be a Shrek that no one has ever seen before, and the perfect show to begin this season,” continued Frank. “For all of us who have ever felt like a misfit at one time or another, this show gives us a chance to celebrate our uniqueness and let our freak flags fly!”

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First Stage announces 2013-14 season/add one

The Herdman kids return in one of the most beloved and popular holiday shows of all time, THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER from November 29 through December 29, 2013. When the rowdy Herdman kids are chosen to star in the annual Christmas pageant, the whole town is horrified! “This is a true First Stage classic,” said Frank. “A quirky yet touching take on the hectic holiday season steeped in the totally “rad” nostalgia of the 80’s!”

January marks the return of A MIDNIGHT CRY from January 10 – February 9, 2014 as the next piece in the Wisconsin Cycle, a new play development initiative honoring the local history and heritage of our state. Written by First Stage Resident Playwright James DeVita, A MIDNIGHT CRY premiered in 2003 to critical acclaim. The play is inspired by the journey of Caroline Quarlls – who escaped slavery, made her way into Wisconsin – through Milwaukee to Detroit and eventually to freedom in Toronto. “I can easily say this is the most powerful play I’ve ever been a part of,” said Artistic Director Jeff Frank. “Music by Josh Schmidt and Sheri Williams Pannell adds to this moving historical drama, a story that is a vital part of our nation’s history.”

The season continues on a lighter note with world premiere musical ANATOLE February 21 – March 16, 2014, with book by Lee Becker and First Stage Associate Artistic Director John Maclay and music by James Valq. Before there was Ratatouillie or Despereaux – there was “Anatole.” “At its heart ANATOLE is a story about family, doing the right thing and living an honorable life,” said John Maclay. “The journey that Anatole takes also allows for excessive humor and laughs.” ANATOLE is inspired by the books by Eve Titus – the tale of France’s bravest and most honorable mouse who, when faced with challenges must decide the kind of mouse he truly wants to be and become Mouse Magnifique!

In spring we take a closer look at bullying with Y York’s moving adaptation of Jerry Spinelli’s novel CRASH, March 28 – April 13, 2014. The story follows troubled teen Crash Coogan who despite seeming to have it all struggles with gaining the attention of his preoccupied father. “CRASH is a play that every upper elementary, middle schooler and high schooler should see

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First Stage announces 2013-14 season/add two

with their families. It reveals the growing societal issue of bullying from the bully’s perspective while simultaneously looking at family structure, sibling relationships, and the true meaning of friendship,” said Frank.

The Family Series at the Todd Wehr concludes as one of the greatest heroines in children’s literature makes her First Stage debut in NANCY DREW and her BIGGEST CASE EVER, May 2 – June 1, 2014. Based on the classic books by Carolyn Keene, this world premiere production by Jeff Frank and John Maclay will feature an original score by renowned musician Willy Porter.

“We are thrilled to have been given permission by Simon and Shuster to create a new adventure inspired by some of our favorite Nancy Drew classics,” said Jeff Frank. “It promises to be a show that will keep the entire family on the edge of their seats with car chases, a capsized canoe, mistaken identity, hidden passages and a few other surprises yet to be revealed.”

First Stage’s ever popular First Steps Series – introducing children ages 3 to 6 to theater in a fun, interactive setting – presents Dr. Seuss’ THE CAT IN THE HAT January 25 – March 2, 2014 at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, 325 W. Walnut Street, Milwaukee. Chris Feiereisen returns to the First Steps stage as the Cat in the Hat. Full of madcap mischief and wacky adventures, this promises to be our best First Steps production yet!

First Stage’s Young Company will have a chance to shine in two fully-produced plays this season. “The Young Company allows our most serious young actors to train with professional actors in pursuit of excellence in their craft,” said First Stage Associate Artistic Director and Director of the Young Company John Maclay. MAUL OF THE DEAD, a hilariously frightening hour of horror, satire and melodrama by Mitch Brian will be performed at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center December 6-8, 2013. When zombies roam an abandoned shopping mall, new

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First Stage announces 2013-14 season/add three

appreciation will be given to the hustle of the holiday season. Spring brings the most famous love story ever told – presented only as First Stage can with Shakespeare’s ROMEO AND JULIET May 16-17, 2014. “This production is the culmination of years of advanced classical training with our award-winning teen classical performers and professional actors including Matt Daniels, Marcella Kearns and others,” said John Maclay. Performed at the Rosa Parks Auditorium at Golda Meir School, this collaboration of Milwaukee’s finest professional Shakespearean actors and First Stage’s most advanced students promises a truly unique, multi-generational performance.

FAMILY SERIES at the Todd Wehr Theater
First Stage’s Family Series at the Todd Wehr Theater offers plays for every age range. Performances are located at the Todd Wehr Theater in the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, 929 North Water Street in downtown Milwaukee.

SHREK THE MUSICAL
October 11 – November 17, 2013
Based on the DreamWorks Animation Motion Picture and the book by William Steig
Book and Lyrics by David Lindsay-Abaire
Music by Jeanine Tesori
Originally produced on Broadway by DreamWorks Theatricals and Neal Street Productions

“Once upon a time, there was a little ogre named Shrek…” And thus begins the fairy tale of an unlikely hero who finds himself on a life-changing journey alongside a wisecracking Donkey, a feisty princess who resists her rescue, and a cast of banished fairy tale misfits. Through heroic feats, Shrek reverses a curse and learns to raise his Freak Flag high. This musical brings a story of adventure, friendship and ogre love that’s bringing ugly back! For everyone ages 6 and up.

THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER
November 29 – December 29, 2013
By Barbara Robinson

They’re baaack! And so is the totally “rad” nostalgia of the 80s when the rowdy Herdman kids are chosen to star in the annual Christmas pageant. The whole town is horrified! But despite the interruptions in church, the fights – and even a small fire! – the spirit of the season comes alive in the Herdmans, making this the best Christmas pageant ever. For everyone ages 4 and up.

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**First Stage announces 2013-14 season/add four**

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**A MIDNIGHT CRY: THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD TO FREEDOM**
January 10 – February 9, 2014
By James DeVita
With musical selections and arrangements by Josh Schmidt
Additional selections and arrangements by Sheri Williams Pannell

This moving historical drama with live music is inspired by the true story of a young slave’s journey to freedom through the Underground Railroad. Whisperings of a railroad helping slaves across to the free states seem too good to be true to young Lida Anderson. But with the help of other slaves and her family, Lida risks everything to be free. Leaving behind the only life she knows, she embarks on a dangerous journey out of slavery to freedom, *A Midnight Cry* brings to life a vital part of our nation’s history. *For everyone ages 9 and up.*

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**ANATOLE**
*A world premiere musical*
February 21 – March 16, 2014
Book and Lyrics by John Maclay and Lee Becker
Music by James Valcq
Based on the books *Anatole* and *Anatole and the Cat®* written by Eve Titus
Illustrations by Paul Galdone
Text copyright © 1984 by Eve Titus
Illustrations copyright © 1984 by Paul Galdone
Performer by Arrangement with Writers House LLC

When the noble French mouse Anatole learns that humans view mice as the villains of France, he embarks on a musical adventure to save a cheese factory, restore his family's honor, conquer a cat, and truly become a Mouse Magnifique! Based on the Caldecott medal winning books, *Anatole* is the story of France’s bravest and most honorable mouse. A wonderful mix of genuine heart and absolute hilarity, *Anatole* promises to delight every member of the family. *For everyone ages 3 and up.*

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**CRASH**
March 28 – April 13, 2014
By Y York
Based on the novel by Jerry Spinelli

Crash Coogan seems to have it all – good grades, athleticism, popular friends. But what he can’t seem to get is the attention of his preoccupied father and the new girl in town, Jane. Despite being the target of Crash’s bullying, Penn Webb, his unconventional neighbor, enjoys a happy life with a pet turtle, strong family support, and even Jane’s friendship. Things suddenly change for Crash when his grandfather suffers a stroke, and he realizes finishing first isn’t the most important thing. *For everyone ages 8 and up.*

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First Stage announces 2013-14 season/add five

**NANCY DREW AND HER BIGGEST CASE EVER**
Featuring an original score by Willy Porter
A world premiere
May 2 – June 1, 2014
A play by Jeff Frank and John Maclay
Based on the books by Carolyn Keene
Performed by arrangement with Simon and Schuster, Inc.

Join us as history's greatest teen detective makes her First Stage debut in this world premiere adventure! In the small town of River Heights, Nancy Drew will face her greatest challenge as she seeks to solve the biggest mystery of her young career. A friend’s heirlooms are stolen, a mysterious stranger brings news of a missing fortune, and only Nancy can save the day. Clues are found, motives are revealed, but will Nancy solve the mystery in time? You will have to be there to find out! *For everyone ages 7 and up.*

**First Steps Series at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center**
These performances are geared toward children ages 3 to 6, introducing them to theater in an engaging, interactive and lively environment at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, 325 West Walnut Street.

**Dr. Seuss’ THE CAT IN THE HAT**
January 25 – March 2, 2014
Based on the book by Dr. Seuss
Play originally produced by the National Theatre of Great Britain

Leave it to the Cat in the Hat! Everyone’s favorite feline in the red and white hat turns a rainy afternoon upside down with his madcap mischief and wacky adventures. Speaking only in rhyme, the Cat in the Hat shows Sally and her brother that “it’s fun to have fun, but you have to know how,” despite the misgivings of their well-mannered Fish. But what will Mother think of all the antics when she returns home? Find out when all of your favorite moments from this Dr. Seuss classic come to life before your eyes.

**First Stage Young Company**
First Stage Young Company – the Academy’s advanced actor training program for high school students – will present two full-scale productions this season.

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First Stage announces 2013-14 season/add six

MAUL OF THE DEAD
December 6-8, 2013
By Mitch Brian

Just when you thought holiday shopping was a nightmare...Black Friday takes on a whole new meaning when zombies roam an abandoned shopping mall. Six strangers take refuge, only to find the walking dead lurking behind every mannequin. It’s a hilariously frightening hour of horror, satire and melodrama that will give new appreciation to the hustle of the holiday season. But beware – all sales are final. For everyone ages 13 and up. Performances held at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, 325 W. Walnut Street.

ROMEO AND JULIET
May 16-17, 2014
By William Shakespeare

The most famous love story ever told – presented as only First Stage can. Young people find true love in a culture of violence and hate. Thrilling sword fights and unparalleled poetry highlight a production featuring some of Milwaukee's finest professional Shakespearean actors working with First Stage's most advanced students, the award-winning First Stage Young Company. This collaboration of established professional theatre artists and Milwaukee's next generation of classical actors promises a rare, truly multi-generational production. For everyone ages 12 and up. Performances held at the Rosa Parks Auditorium at Golda Meir School, 1615 N. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Milwaukee.

First Stage Family Packages
First Stage Family Packages – any combination of tickets for three or more plays – are on sale to the general public beginning April 15, 2013. With a Family Package purchase, families receive free and unlimited ticket exchanges, the opportunity to attend free family workshops and a backstage tour, and more. Family Package prices are available at nearly 50% off the cost of regular single ticket price through June 30, 2013. More information is available by visiting www.FirstStage.org or calling (414) 267-2961 to request a season brochure.

About First Stage
Since 1987, First Stage touches hearts, engages minds, and transforms lives by creating extraordinary theater experiences for young people and families through professional theater productions that inspire, enlighten, and entertain; unparalleled Theater Academy training that fosters life skills through stage skills; and dynamic Theater in Education programs that promote active learning in our schools and community. In 2012, First Stage was selected to participate in the Partners in Education program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. First Stage is a member of TYA/USA, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education, Theatre Wisconsin, and Milwaukee Arts Partners, and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF).

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