



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First Stage proudly presents
ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND:
A Create Your Own Adventure Play

-Join Callaway Brown in this interactive, unforgettable adventure of a lifetime-

Milwaukee, WI – April 24, 2024 – First Stage concludes its 2023/24 season with an exciting, truly inventive production of **ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND: A Create Your Own Adventure Play** by award-winning playwright and frequent First Stage collaborator **Finegan Kruckemeyer**. The play will be directed by First Stage Artistic Director **Jeff Frank**, who also directed the virtual 2020/21 production. Popular Milwaukee and First Stage actor **Matt Daniels** (*THE LIGHTNING THIEF: The Percy Jackson Musical*) will appear in the production along with the multifaceted actor, **Shammen McCune**. Both actors appeared in last season's hit production of *THE HOBBIT* performed at Milwaukee Youth Arts Center. In this thrilling interactive production, we find our protagonist Callaway Brown – an unlikely young hero – who has been stranded on a desert island, and it's up to First Stage audiences to decide what happens next. Audience members vote on Callaway's actions in an energetic romp through time and space. Will Callaway time travel to the Wild West and meet a talking horse? Develop superpowers and fight crime in the future? Or have a crush on a vampire? The choice is up to First Stage audience members!

ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND: A Create Your Own Adventure Play runs **May 10 – June 2, 2024** in the newly renovated, theater-in-the-round Goodman Mainstage Hall, **Milwaukee Youth Arts Center**, located at 325 W. Walnut Street in downtown Milwaukee. Tickets start at \$22 and are available online at firststage.org or through the First Stage Box Office at **(414) 267-2961**. *Performance runtime is approximately 75 minutes, which includes a brief intermission. Suggested for adults, teens and children ages 5 – 6, 7 – 9 and 10 – 12.*

First Stage Artistic Director/Director **Jeff Frank** had this to say about ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND: “First produced in our virtual 2020/21 season, we’re bringing back this create your own adventure play live on stage in the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center’s Goodman Mainstage Hall. Throughout the production, the audience will vote multiple times as to the course of action for our hero Callaway Brown. With more than 1,000 different possible combinations of choices, no two performances will ever be the same! I hope audiences will come back more than once to witness the magic of this show. This fast-moving, boldly theatrical rollercoaster ride of a production is suitable for the entire family. Whether the story takes us under the sea, to the old west, to battle an aging vampire or to save the world, there is something for everyone. Filled with laughter and adventure while celebrating Callaway’s discovery of becoming who they were meant to be.”

Playwright **Finegan Kruckemeyer** also shared some insight into his protagonist Callaway Brown: “I like heroes who don’t realize they are a hero, who are often overlooked, and it’s thrust upon them. They don’t fit in. They haven’t proven themselves to be great in their own life. But if a big adventure were to befall them, could they prove themselves to be great? I have faith in characters who don’t tell you everything at the start, but then as we go on a journey together with them, we discover more about them. My plays often have both internal and external explorations. One kind of assists the other – if you have somebody who doesn’t think they are worthy of being a hero and then they’re thrown into a situation where they discover they can be and they’re also going on a journey – that’s very exciting to me as a playwright! So inside they are changing, and they are becoming braver with every step on the outside. I like protagonists who choose a different path and take the braver option.”

BIOGRAPHIES

Finegan Kruckemeyer (Playwright) has had 101 commissioned plays performed on six continents and translated into eight languages. He has received 42 awards (at least one each year since 2002) including the [2017 Mickey Miners Lifetime Achievement Award](#) for services to international theatre for young audiences, the 2015 David Williamson Award for Excellence in Australian Playwriting, and an inaugural Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship.

In 2022, 38 seasons of 14 plays (including three world premieres) will be presented globally, in six countries and three languages. In Germany, he is represented by Rowohlt Agency. To date, Finegan’s plays have had seasons in: 200 international festivals; all Australian states/territories; eight U.S. national tours; five U.K. national tours; and at the Sydney Opera House (seven works), Scotland’s Imagine Festival (four works), New York’s Lincoln Center for the Arts (three works), DC’s Kennedy Center for the Arts (three works), Ireland’s Abbey Theatre (two works) and Shanghai’s Malan Flower Theatre (two works). As well as the Mickey Miners and David Williamson Awards and Sidney Myer Fellowship, Finegan and his work have received eight Australian Writers Guild (AWGIE) Awards, 2012 Helpmann Award for Children’s Theatre, 2010 Rodney Seaborn Award, 2006 Jill Blewett Playwrights Award and 2002 Colin Thiele Scholarship.

Finegan has been a speaker at the Ubud Writer's Festival (Indonesia), the Edinburgh International Children's Theatre Festival (Scotland), TYA USA National Conference, and the ITYARN Conference (Argentina), among others. He has delivered papers or sat on panels at conferences/festivals in nine countries, with papers published. He was one of 21 selected worldwide for the ASSITEJ *Next Generation* (young leaders in children's theatre) and has sat on numerous arts boards including the Australian Script Centre and Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board, Arts Tasmania's *Assistance to Individuals*, *Tas Literary Awards* and *Artsbridge* panels, and the *Story Island Project* board (promoting youth literacy and empowerment through storytelling with marginalized young people).

Finegan was born in Ireland and moved halfway around the world to Adelaide, Australia aged eight. After 15 years, he and his wife left for the island state of Tasmania. And after 15 more, with their son Moe, they returned. He is committed to making strong and respectful work for children, which acknowledges them as astute audience members outside the play, and worthy subjects within.

Jeff Frank (Artistic Director/Director) is recognized as one of the top directors in the field with an expertise in developing new work for the theater for young audience field. 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, Jeff remains committed to the power of theater to transform lives and forever thankful to call First Stage home. Some of his favorite shows include: *MATILDA*, *THE MUSICAL*, *A MIDNIGHT CRY*, *LUCHADORA* and *GRETEL!* Much love to his wife and children, who provide constant support and inspiration.

ADULT CAST

Matt Daniels*: (Adult Actor 1) and **Shammen McCune*** (Adult Actor 2).

Understudies: Leo Madson (Understudy for Matt Daniels) and **Bree Kazinski** (Understudy for Shammen McCune).

*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 **Destiny Cast** include: **Charlie Cornell** (Elm Grove) as Callaway Brown; **Hazel Dye** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble/Narrator; **Natalie Ottman** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble/Narrator; **Max Larson** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble/Narrator; **Lola Onorato** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble/Narrator and **Elsa Johnstone** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble/Narrator.

Young Performers in the **Chance Cast** include: **Vivian Madson** (West Allis) as Callaway Brown; **Josie Van Slyke** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble/Narrator; **Alice Rivera** (Milwaukee) as Ensemble/Narrator; **Zach Church** (West Bend) as Ensemble/Narrator; **Hannah Willis** (Mequon) as Ensemble/Narrator and **Maryn Davis** (New Berlin) as Ensemble/Narrator.

Please note: To find which cast is performing on a specific performance date and time, please refer to the website on the show page located here: [ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND: A Create Your Own Adventure Play](#).

Creative Team

The Creative Team for **ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND: A Create Your Own Adventure Play** includes: **Jeff Frank** (Artistic Director/Director); **Leo Madson** (Assistant Director); **Matt Daniels** (Movement Director); **Kristin Ellert** (Scenic Designer); **Jazmin Aurora Medina** (Costume Designer); **Adriana Hollenbeck** (Puppet Designer); **Tim Thistleton** (Lighting Designer); **Elisabeth Weidner, USA** (Sound Designer); **Emily Wright*** (Stage Manager) and **Lauren Westfahl** (Assistant Stage Manager).

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Tickets start at \$22 – Tickets may be purchased at [firststage.org](https://www.firststage.org) or by phone **(414) 267-2961**.

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.

Special events for ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND: A Create Your Own Adventure Play

Tech Talk: Sunday, May 12, 2024 following the 3:30 p.m. performance

Stick around following select performances for First Stage Tech Talks, an extended talkback featuring special guests to give audiences a glimpse at the behind-the-scenes magic of First Stage productions. This Tech Tack will feature special guest **Nikki Kulas**, First Stage Properties Master.

Pay What You Choose Performance: Friday, May 17, 2024 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/).

Sensory Friendly Performance: Saturday, June 1, 2024 at 3:30 p.m.

A Sensory Friendly Performance with accommodations for families with children on the autism spectrum will take place on Saturday, June 1 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/.

ASL Interpreted Performance: Sunday, June 2, 2024 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: ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND: A Create Your Own Adventure Play

By Finegan Kruckemeyer

Directed by Artistic Director **Jeff Frank**

Location: Goodman Mainstage Hall, Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, 325 W. Walnut Street, Milwaukee

Performances: May 10 – June 2, 2024

Description: Callaway Brown – an unlikely young hero – has been stranded on a desert island, and it's up to YOU to decide what happens next! In this interactive production, audience members vote on Callaway's actions in an energetic romp through time and space. Will Callaway time travel to the Wild West and meet a talking horse? Develop superpowers and fight crime in the future? Or have a crush on a vampire? The choice is yours! *Performance runtime is approximately 75 minutes, which includes a brief intermission Suggested for adults, teens and children ages 5 – 6, 7 – 9 and 10 – 12.*

Performances:

- Friday, May 10 at 7:00 p.m. – *OPENING PERFORMANCE*
- Saturday, May 11 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, May 12 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *TECH TALK FOLLOWING 3:30 PERFORMANCE*
- Friday, May 17 at 7:00 p.m. – *PAY WHAT YOU CHOOSE PERFORMANCE*
- Saturday, May 18 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, May 19 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Friday, May 31 at 7:00 p.m.

- Saturday, June 1 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *SENSORY FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE AT 3:30 P.M.*
- Sunday, June 2 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *ASL PERFORMANCE AT 3:30 P.M.*

For more information, please visit firststage.org or call (414) 267-2961.

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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