



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bob Marley's THREE LITTLE BIRDS **brings Jamaican good vibes to** **First Stage this spring**

-Join Ziggy as he overcomes his fears and enjoys the adventures of life-

Milwaukee, WI – April 3, 2023 – Infectious reggae music, colorful costumes and sets bring the culture of Jamaica to life in the Todd Wehr Theater with First Stage's production of **Bob Marley's THREE LITTLE BIRDS**. This delightful play is based on the children's book by **Cedella Marley**, Bob Marley's daughter, and includes music and lyrics by **Bob Marley** and is adapted for the stage by **Michael J. Bobbitt**. Arrangements, orchestrations and additional music and lyrics are by **John L. Cornelius, II**. Ziggy is afraid to leave his house. He is too busy worrying about tropical storms, evil spirits and the sneaky, hair-grabbing trickster, Duppy. With the help of his feathered friends, Ziggy will learn that "every little thing is gonna be all right!" With music from the legendary reggae artist, audience members young and old will enjoy jammin' with this timeless tale of peace and love.

Bob Marley's THREE LITTLE BIRDS runs **April 21 – May 21, 2023** at the Marcus Center's Todd Wehr Theater, located at 929 N. Water Street in downtown Milwaukee. Tickets start at **\$18** 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 70 minutes, which includes a brief intermission.*

From Director Samantha D. Montgomery: "Ziggy is fearful about what might happen to him and this restricts him from living and enjoying the adventures of life. This play, Bob Marley's

THREE LITTLE BIRDS, adapted for the stage by Michael J. Bobbitt, encourages us to enjoy the adventures of life by not allowing our fears to stifle us. Instead, we must rebuild ourselves and overcome our fears by finding the strength within ourselves to make bravery our only choice.”

Or as **Debbie Minter Jackson** with DC Theatre Scene commented: “Filled with powerful messages without resorting to maudlin sentimentality, Bob Marley’s THREE LITTLE BIRDS shows a youngster facing his deepest fears – who hasn’t feared that? But with friends and loving support (and terrific music), he discovers strengths that he didn’t even know he had – again, timeless life lessons applicable to all.”

BIOGRAPHIES

Cedella Marley (Author) is the first born of Bob and Rita Marley and a descendant of reggae royalty. She is an accomplished singer, an inspiring author, an adventurous fashion designer and visionary entrepreneur. The world first met Cedella as a singing and dancing teenager with The Melody Makers, the Marley sibling group featuring her younger brothers Ziggy and Stephen. The group toured the world establishing a new generation of Marley musical mystique, as they sold millions of albums and won three Grammy Awards. In 1993, Cedella was appointed as C.E.O. of Tuff Gong International, the group of companies now includes a renowned state of the art recording studio in Kingston, Jamaica, which is utilized by the island’s top reggae artists and producers, Marley’s sons and an array of international artists. Cedella is also an accomplished children’s book author, having written *The Boy from Nine Miles (The Early Life of Bob Marley)*, *Three Little Birds*, *One Love and Every Little Thing*. Published by Chronicle Books in 2012 is Cedella’s *Every Little Thing* is adapted from the lyrics to her father’s beloved song *Three Little Birds*. Debuting in an Off-Broadway children’s play adaptation in 2014 this children’s book is a follow up to Chronicle’s widely successful earlier release of *One Love*. Adapted from one of Bob Marley’s most beloved songs, *One Love* brings the joyful spirit and unforgettable lyrics of his music to life for a new generation. This heartwarming picture book offers an upbeat testament to the amazing things that can happen when we all get together with one love in our hearts. To learn more about her creative and philanthropic work, visit: cedellamarley.com

Bob Marley (Music and Lyrics), born Robert Nesta Marley (February 6, 1945 – May 11, 1981), was a Jamaican singer, musician and songwriter. Considered one of the pioneers of reggae, his musical career was marked by fusing elements of reggae, ska and rocksteady as well as his distinctive vocal and songwriting style. Marley’s contributions to music increased the visibility of Jamaica worldwide and made him a global figure in popular culture to this day. Over the course of his career, Marley became known as a Rastafari icon, and he infused his music with a sense of spirituality. He is also considered a global symbol of Jamaican music and culture and identity and was controversial in his outspoken support for democratic social reforms. [Bob Marley](#)

Michael J. Bobbitt (Playwright) is an award-winning theater director, choreographer and playwright who has dedicated his professional career to arts leadership. He began his tenure as

Executive Director of Mass Cultural Council in February 2021 and is the highest-ranking cultural official in Massachusetts. Bobbitt serves on the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) Board of Directors, the National Assembly of State Arts Agency's (NASAA) Board of Directors and was selected for artEquity's BIPOC Leadership Circle. He is the former Artistic Director of the New Repertory Theater in Watertown, Massachusetts and the Adventure Theater in Maryland. Bobbitt gained extensive experience in nonprofit arts management by training at Harvard Business School's Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management, The National Arts Strategies Chief Executive Program and Cornell University's Diversity and Inclusion Certification Program. As a director and choreographer, he has worked nationally and internationally. As a writer his plays have been published by Concord Theatricals, Broadway Publishing and Plays for Young Audiences. Bobbitt is the recipient of the Excel Leadership Award (Center for Nonprofit Advancement), the Emerging Leader Award (County Executive's Excellence in the Arts and Humanities) and Person of the Year Award (Maryland Theatre Guide), along with eight Helen Hayes Awards.

Samantha D. Montgomery (Director/Director of Artistic Inclusion and Community Engagement) is a performance artist who is committed to the process of learning. She has worked in both traditional and non-traditional educational settings. Teaching is her passion, connectivity is her goal and working collaboratively in unity to nurture trust, acceptance, inclusion and community is her commitment. She has enjoyed working at First Stage as a Teaching Artist and is grateful for the opportunity to work as the Artistic Inclusion and Community Engagement Director. Samantha is a member of Actors' Equity Association. She holds a BA from Alverno College in Professional Communication, a MS from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in Administrative Leadership and Supervision in Adult Education and a MA from Alverno College in Education.

Sonya Thompson (Choreographer) was born and raised in Jamaica. She has been dancing since she was 4 years old. Embedded in her soul are the traditional culturalisms of African people throughout the Caribbean Diaspora. She has an Associate's Degree from MATC in Administrative Professional Applied Science and plans to pursue her Bachelor's degree from University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee in Criminal Justice.

ADULT CAST

Cynthia Cobb* (Cedella/Montego/Spanish Bird/Great Aunt African Bird); **James Carrington*** (Duppy/Villager/Great Grandfather Spanish Bird); **Ogunde Snelling** (Dr. Bird); **Brandite Reed** (Understudy for Cynthia Cobb); **Nicole McCarty** (Understudy for James Carrington) and **Sam Gist** (Understudy for Ogunde Snelling).

*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 **Jamaican Owl Cast** include: **Reece Davis** (Milwaukee) as Ziggy; **Amirah Muhammad** (Milwaukee) as Nansi and **Maya O'Day-Biddle** (Greenfield) as Tacoomah.

Young Performers in the **Jamaican Becard Cast** include: **Julius Newman** (Milwaukee) as Ziggy; **Amira Harris** (Milwaukee) as Nansi and **Zoe Chambers** (Milwaukee) as Tacoomah.

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/2022-23-season/bob-marley-s-three-little-birds/

The Artistic & Creative Team for **Bob Marley's THREE LITTLE BIRDS** includes: **Samantha D. Montgomery** (Director); **Sonya Thompson** (Choreographer); **Benito Leatherwood** (Music Director); **Sydney Lynne Thomas** (Scenic Designer); **Erica Lauren Maholmes** (Lighting Designer); **Kenann Quander** (Costume Designer); **Kevin Alexander, USA** (Sound Designer); **Madeline M. Scott*** (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 \$18 – Tickets may be purchased at 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.

COVID Protocols: First Stage no longer requires proof of vaccination upon arrival, and masks will be optional in the theater, unless the community level in Milwaukee County is rated in the High category, as determined by the CDC. First Stage COVID safety protocols and updates can be viewed here: [firststage.org/covid-19-safety-protocols/ - performances](https://firststage.org/covid-19-safety-protocols/-performances)

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/

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 can be found here:

firststage.org/media/jbhllq5g/threelittlebirds_enrichmentguide.pdf

Special events for Bob Marley's THREE LITTLE BIRDS

Pay What You Choose Performance: Friday, April 28, 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 \$5 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/

Sensory Friendly Performance: Saturday, May 6, 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, May 6, 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/.

ASL Interpreted Performance: Sunday, May 21, 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

About: Bob Marley's THREE LITTLE BIRDS

Based on a story by **Cedella Marley**; Music and Lyrics by **Bob Marley**

Adapted for the stage by **Michael J. Bobbitt**

Arrangements, Orchestrations, Additional Music & Lyrics by **John L. Cornelius, II**

Directed by **Samantha D. Montgomery**

Choreographed by **Sonya Thompson of Ko-Thi Dance Company**

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

Live Performances: April 21 – May 21, 2023

Description: Ziggy's afraid to leave the house. He's too busy worrying about tropical storms, evil spirits and the sneaky, hair-grabbing trickster, Duppy. With the help of his feathered friends, Ziggy will learn that "every little thing is gonna be all right!" With music from the legendary reggae artist, get jammin' with this timeless tale of peace and love. *Performance runtime is approximately 70 minutes, which includes a brief intermission. Suggested for families with young people ages 3+.*

Performances:

- Friday, April 21 at 7:00 p.m. – *OPENING*
- Saturday, April 22 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, April 23 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Friday, April 28 at 7:00 p.m. – *PAY WHAT YOU CHOOSE PERFORMANCE*
- Saturday, April 29 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, April 30 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, May 6 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *SENSORY FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE AT 3:30 P.M.*
- Sunday, May 7 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, May 13 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, May 14 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, May 20 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, May 21 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 ensures that all programming is not only accessible to its community but that it is reflective of the community it serves.

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 young people on the autism spectrum and with other developmental disabilities. 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 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