



FIRST STAGE

CHILDREN'S THEATER • IN-SCHOOL EDUCATION • THEATER ACADEMY
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FIRST STAGE CHILDREN'S THEATER ANNOUNCES 2009-2010 SEASON

Milwaukee, Wisconsin (March 30, 2009) - First Stage Children's Theater celebrates 23 seasons of productions for young people with a series of fabulous plays all adapted from literature, including the return of a perennial holiday favorite, THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER. First Stage's five Mainstage productions will be performed in the Todd Wehr Theater of the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts; its two First Steps Series shows are held at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center.

A season filled with big splashes starts with the October 16 opening of JUNIE B. JONES AND A LITTLE MONKEY BUSINESS. According to Jeff Frank, the company's artistic director, "Joan Cushing's adaptation and music for this production are delightful. Her musical adaptation of MISS NELSON IS MISSING! in 2004 was a tremendous hit for us." Frank goes on to explain, "With Junie B.'s character, Joan has managed to capture her vibrancy and zest for life, while also showing us the heart of a young girl who has genuine fears about the new arrival in her family. It's this balance of humor and heart that makes the piece work so well."

First Stage "eases on down the road" with their presentation of THE WIZ, which is scheduled to open on March 5. "Given our success in developing new material for the stage," states Frank, "the Susan Gurman Agency approached us about developing the Theater for Young Audiences adaptation of THE WIZ." Frank continues, "We are so excited to take a fresh look at this story and to build on its success utilizing the strengths we have as a company."

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First Stage Children's Theater Announces 2009-2010 Season / add one

THE THIEF LORD by Cornelia Funke will have audiences on the edge of their seats,” says Frank. “Adapted for stage by James DeVita, this is an amazing adventure that explores the bond between two brothers and how far they will go to stay together.” Opening on January 22, this play is set amidst the magical streets and canals of Venice. The production opens with a chase scene and the excitement seldom slows down from there. “Just around the corner is another mystery or quest to explore – all leading to an unexpected and wondrous conclusion,” states Frank.

Frank is also looking forward to the return of favorite holiday play THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER. “Audiences clamor for it no matter how often we produce it,” states Frank. “We’ve added a twist this time, setting the play in the ‘80s. With big hair and all, I expect this production will be a lot of fun for kids and quite nostalgic for parents.”

THE PLAYS

JUNIE B. JONES AND A LITTLE MONKEY BUSINESS

October 16 – November 14, 2009

Based on the book by Barbara Park

Music and lyrics by Joan Cushing

Directed by John Maclay

The precocious kindergartner Junie B. Jones has a big, giant dilemma. There’s a new “P.U. STINK BOMB B-A-B-Y” brother at her house and she has no idea what to bring to school for Show and Tell. But when Grandma Miller calls him “the cutest little monkey,” she decides she just may have the best Show and Tell ever. Junie B.’s two bestest friends Grace and Lucille are trading her everything they own just to see her “real, alive baby monkey.” And guess what else? Maybe she can bring him to school on Pet Day.

Most appreciated by adults, teens and children ages four and up.

First Stage Children's Theater Announces 2009-2010 Season / add two

THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

November 27 – December 24, 2009

Book and adaptation by Barbara Robinson

Directed by Jeff Frank

Nobody would have believed that the Herdman kids – the worst kids in the history of the world! – would have wanted to take part in the annual church Christmas Pageant. And nobody would have believed that this year's pageant would be the best ever. But through the Herdmans' newfound enthusiasm while retelling the miracle of the Christmas story, everyone discovers the true meaning of Christmas.

Most appreciated by adults, teens and children ages four and up.

THE THIEF LORD

January 22 – February 10, 2010

Book by Cornelia Funke

Adapted by James DeVita

Directed by Jeff Frank

From the author of *Inkheart*, comes another amazing tale of adventure and intrigue. On the run from their heartless aunt and uncle, orphans fifteen-year-old Prosper and six-year-old Bo flee to Venice, the enchanted city their mother had told them so many tales of. There, they join a group of children led by the mysterious, masked figure known as the Thief Lord. The brothers relish being part of this colorful new family, but the Thief Lord has secrets of his own. And soon the boys are thrust into circumstances that will lead them to a fantastic, spellbinding conclusion.

Most appreciated by adults, teens and children ages eight and up.

First Stage Children's Theater Announces 2009-2010 Season / add three

THE WIZ

March 5 – 28, 2010

Adapted from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum

Book by William F. Brown

Music and lyrics by Charlie Smalls

Orchestrations by Richard Carsey

Theater for Young Audiences Adaptation by First Stage Children's Theater

Directed by Anthony (Tony) Horne

In this version of the classic story, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum, young Dorothy, a hip Scarecrow, an uptight Tin Man and a mama's boy Lion seek help from the Great Man in the flashy city in this dazzling and funky musical set to a lively score combining rock, gospel and soul music. The cool hop down the yellow brick road includes hit songs such as "Home," "If You Believe" and "Ease on Down the Road."

Most appreciated by adults, teens and children ages six and up.

ALEXANDER, AND THE TERRIBLE, HORRIBLE, NO GOOD, VERY BAD DAY

April 9 – May 9, 2010

Based on the book by Judith Viorst

Lyrics by Judith Viorst

Music by Shelly Markham

Directed by Jeff Frank

It's 7:00 a.m. You wake up with a nasty wad of gum in your hair. Trip on your skateboard. Drop your sweater in a sink full of water. And your brothers express interest in trading you for some roller blades. And now it's only 7:15 a.m.! As bad days go, it's tough to top Alexander's. He's the funniest fed-up kid ever, and this is one of the coolest musicals ever.

Most appreciated by adults, teens and children ages three and up.

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First Stage Children's Theater Announces 2009-2010 Season / add four

In addition to these five Mainstage productions, First Stage Children's Theater is proud to announce its third season of the First Steps series. This series of two plays for children ages three through six is designed to introduce our youngest audience members and their families to the theater in a fun, interactive environment. With smaller audiences, these intimate productions are specifically designed to engage and involve the youngest audience members and their families. Both First Steps plays will take place in the Main Stage Hall at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center at 325 W. Walnut Street in Milwaukee.

FIRST STEPS SERIES

THE PLAYS

IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE

November 7 – 22, 2009

Adapted by Jody Davidson from *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*

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Directed by John Maclay

The mishaps and mayhem begin when Mouse comes to visit. The well-meaning but harried rodent simply asks for a treat, and then the chaos starts. A hilarious frenzy ensues when a young boy tries to keep the house and Mouse in order when Mom's away. Young audiences will love seeing their favorite trouble-making Mouse on stage.

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First Stage Children's Theater Announces 2009-2010 Season / add five

IF YOU TAKE A MOUSE TO SCHOOL

March 13 – 18, 2010

Adapted by Ernie Nolan from *If You Take a Mouse to School*

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Directed by Jeff Frank

The famous little mouse from *If You Give A Mouse A Cookie* is back in time for the first day of school. Besides working a math problem and spelling a word or two, Mouse creates chaos with a science experiment, builds a little house for himself out of blocks, and writes his very own first book.

TICKET INFORMATION

Season tickets for the 2009-2010 season are on sale now. Season ticket packages start at \$9.50 per ticket, and consists of the patron's choice of three or more plays. To order season tickets or for more information, call 414.267.2961, weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or visit www.firststage.org. Single tickets to individual plays go on sale Monday, August 24, with prices starting at \$10.50.

School group tickets for weekday matinee performances, range from \$5 - \$7.25, with one free chaperone ticket per group of 20. Teachers can call 414.267.2962 on weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. to place an order.

First Stage Children's Theater is Milwaukee's premier, professional family theater. Founded in 1987, the mission of the company is to provide professional theater productions for young people and their families that engage, enlighten and entertain,

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First Stage Children's Theater Announces 2009-2010 Season / add six

Theater Academy training that fosters life skills through stage skills and dynamic in-school education programs that provide learning through theater. First Stage is a member of the Theater Communications Group, TYA/USA, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education and Americans for the Arts as well as Theatre Wisconsin and Milwaukee Arts Partners, and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF).

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