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Lois Lowry adapts *Gossamer* for the stage
Her first script is co-commissioned by
Oregon Children's Theatre and First Stage Children's Theater

Portland, Ore./Milwaukee, Wis.—In an unusual collaboration between children's theaters, Oregon Children's Theatre (OCT) of Portland, Ore. and First Stage Children's Theater (First Stage) of Milwaukee, Wis. have collaborated to co-commission GOSSAMER, a play based on Newbery award-winning author Lois Lowry's recent book of the same title. Lowry is writing the stage adaptation, which is her first play. The world premiere of GOSSAMER will run in September 19 through October 5 at First Stage and October 18 through November 9 at OCT.

The creative team consists of author Lois Lowry, Jeff Frank (First Stage Artistic Director), and Stan Foote (Oregon Children's Theatre Artistic Director). The two theater companies have many commonalities that make them ideal partners: a commitment to age appropriate casting, acting schools that prepare students for the stage, youth involvement in the writing process, a commitment to develop new work, and programming that gives voice to the disenfranchised. Foote and Frank have a mutual respect for each other's work and each other's companies that moves them to partner on this project and additional projects in the future.

“To take a new look at something already written and published—to go at it again, in a new way, is a chance few writers get,” says Lois Lowry. “So this is a treat for me. And a very different sort of experience. Writing fiction is a solitary enterprise. Lonely, sometimes. To turn for the first time to playwriting—a very collaborative act—is invigorating. And of course Stan and Jeff make it fun.”

While the script will be the same at both theatres, both First Stage and OCT will take a different creative approach to the staging. Working in different theatres brings separate challenges and opportunities for each of the directors.

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“Lois has written a fascinating story,” says Stan Foote, OCT Artistic Director. “Two compelling story lines parallel each other with chronicles of young characters and their strong experienced mentors. The environments that these characters inhabit become complex when they collide. Working with Lois Lowry on her first play and partnering with First Stage is an honor.”

“Lois creates really powerful pieces; she is never afraid of dealing with controversial issues,” said Jeff Frank, First Stage Artistic Director. “She creates this fantastical world with a blending of wonder and some harsh reality. GOSSAMER really shows how memory informs who we become and how we cope.”

GOSSAMER is about a group of dream givers, who collect memories from belongings important to the individual and then weave them together to create dreams. The story follows a young boy and his mother, both escaping from an abusive past, and an older woman who serves as the boy’s foster mother. The boy is haunted by nightmares, given to him by the evil Sinisteeds. His dream giver, Littlest One, must muster all her courage to weave happy dreams that will strengthen and protect him.

In GOSSAMER, we find each of the main characters facing their own fears. Author Lois Lowry comments, “Their fears are all assuaged in that magical world, the Dreamworld, in which memory and yearning and symbols come together with no reliance on time or logic, in the place where things combine to bring solace to damaged souls.” Lowry continues, “All of this is orchestrated by Littlest, the one who fears her own power until she comes to terms with it and accepts her own growth.”

ABOUT LOIS LOWRY

Lois Lowry has written more than 30 books for young readers and received many citations and awards, including Newbery Medals for her novels *Number the Stars* (1989) and *The Giver* (1993). Lowry was born in Hawaii and lived in New York, Pennsylvania and Tokyo, Japan before settling in New York for high school. She attended Brown University, but dropped out to get married and start a family. The mother of four children, she completed her college education in Maine and worked as a writer and photographer. Since the 1970s she has published novels known for expressing realistic life experiences, including the trilogy *The Giver*, *Gathering Blue* and *The Messenger* and the *Anastasia Krupnik* series of books. Her other books include *A*

Summer to Die (1977), *Autumn Street* (1979) and *Rabble Starkey* (1987). *Gossamer* was written in 2006. Lowry recently received the American Library Association's Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in young adult literature.

ABOUT OREGON CHILDREN'S THEATRE

Founded in 1989, Oregon Children's Theatre is Oregon's largest non-profit professional children's theater company and a resident company of the Portland Center for the Performing Arts. OCT serves more than 111,000 children of all ages each year. OCT offers numerous school services including in-school workshops and an extensive outreach program. OCT's year round Acting Academy offers theater classes for children ages 4-17. OCT is a member of Theater Communications Group, TYA/USA, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, Northwest Business for Culture and the Arts, and Portland Area Theater Alliance.

ABOUT FIRST STAGE CHILDREN'S THEATER

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, 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.

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