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Contact Lisa Elias 414.267.2944

lelias@firststage.org

First Stage Children's Theater shares a rollicking adventure aboard a pirate ship in

How I Became A Pirate

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Book, music and lyrics by Janet Yates-Vogt and Mark Friedman

Directed by John Maclay

Sponsored by Actuant

April 17 – May 17, 2009
Todd Wehr Theater, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts

This play is most appreciated by adults, teens and young people ages three and older.

Milwaukee, Wis. (March 17, 2009) – In the world premiere of First Stage Children's Theater's musical version of HOW I BECAME A PIRATE, young Jeremy Jacob learns that although a wild and wooly adventure on a pirate ship can be fun, it doesn't compare to the many joys of home. The show runs April 17 through May 17 at the Todd Wehr Theater in the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, 929 N. Water Street in downtown Milwaukee.

AARRRRGH! Is a pirate's life for me? Little Jeremy is about to find out. As he is happily making sandcastles on the beach, a ship sails in with a Jolly Roger raised on the mast. When the crew hits the beach, they discover they're lost "We must

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have taken a wrong turn at Bora Bora!” The affable party of pirates take note of Jeremy’s digging skills (as they have a chest of treasure to bury) and he’s asked to join Braid Beard’s crew of pirates. As the pirate party sings and dances their way through a number of catchy tunes, Jeremy soon learns all about being a pirate. He happily throws his food across the table and his manners to the wind. “Down the hatch!” is the call at dinner time. After he’s told by this burly band of buccaneers, “It’s going to be spectacular when you learn the right vernacular,” Jeremy yells with a mighty thunder and simply chuckles at the thought of bedtime. Jeremy is having a heave-ho, blow-the-man-down, most magnificent time of his life. Magnificent, that is, until he learns there is a down side of pirate life, too. Too tired to keep his eyes open, Jeremy longs for a bedtime story and then to be tucked in. “No tucking!” bellows the band of scurvy salts. And there are certainly no goodnight kisses. Jeremy learns that although the pirate’s life is an incredibly fun adventure, his real treasures are waiting for him at home.

Janet Yates-Vogt and Mark Friedman, authors of this musical version of HOW I BECAME A PIRATE, are not strangers to musical successes, according to John Maclay, First Stage’s associate artistic director and Theater Academy director, who also directs the show. “Mark and Janet, who wrote the wildly successful musical GREEN GABLES (presented by First Stage in 2007), have again taken a marvelous book and turned it into a fabulous musical. This time, it’s an hour of non-stop musical pirate fun.” Pirates? In a Band? “Yes, we have that, too,” states Maclay. “We have a very versatile group of talented actors, who also double as the Pirate Band. Complete with guitars, an accordion, mandolins and penny whistles, the band takes Jeremy on a musical journey through a day in the life of a pirate.” While there are plenty of laughs in this jolly pirate musical, it also has heart, explains Maclay. “There comes a point when young Jeremy realizes that – while adventures are fun – it really is nice to be home.”

If your family is in need of care-free fun and a good laugh, this show is not to be missed, concludes Maclay. “HOW I BECAME A PIRATE is a hilarious, rockin’ pirate musical that’s guaranteed to entertain people of all ages.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Melinda Long is a former teacher, as well as a picture book author. Her books *How I Became a Pirate* and *Pirates Don't Change Diapers* evolved from the combination of spending her childhood burying treasure in her backyard, and spending her adult life teaching literature. These days she speaks fluent pirate (all teachers say "Aargh!" once in a while) and she insists that bedtime stories are a must for pirates and landlubbers alike.

Melinda is also the author of *Hiccup Snickup*, illustrated by Thor Wickstrom (Simon & Schuster, 2001), and *When Papa Snores*, illustrated by Holly Meade (Simon & Schuster, 2000). She lives with her husband and two children in Greenville, South Carolina – not far, in fact, from two former pirate hangouts.

ARTISTIC STAFF

Director / Associate Artistic	John Maclay
Director / Academy Director	
Music Director / Actor	James Valcq*
Choreographer	Diana LeMense
Scenic Designer / Props Director	Mark Hare
Costume Designer	Tina Campbell
Lighting Designer	Holly Blomquist
Sound Designer	Ernie Brusubardis

ADULT ACTORS

Sharktooth	Lee Becker*
Braid Beard	Todd Denning*
Max	Bo Johnson*
Braunschwagger	John Nicholson
Female Pirate	Susan Nicholson

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional Actors and Stage Managers.

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YOUNG ACTORS

Teen Girl Pirate

Teen Boy Pirate

Pierre

Jeremy Jacob

Arrgh Cast

Ashley Patin
Muskego

Andrew Oppmann
Hartland

Teddy Warren
Milwaukee

Austin Zdziarski
Oak Creek

Bucko Cast

Kelley Annesley
Wauwatosa

Mitchell Bultman
Wauwatosa

Teddy Warren
Milwaukee

Keegan Cimler
Delafield

PERFORMANCE DATES

HOW I BECAME A PIRATE opens Friday, April 17 at 7:00 p.m. in the Todd Wehr Theater at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts. The 3:30 p.m. performance on Sunday, May 17 will be interpreted for the deaf and hard of hearing patrons. The full schedule of family performances includes:

Fridays:	April 17 and May 8	7:00 p.m.
Saturdays:	April 25 and May 9, 16 April 18 and May 2	1:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. 7:00 p.m.
Sundays:	April 19, 26 and May 3, 10, 17	1:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

TICKET INFORMATION

Ticket prices for HOW I BECAME A PIRATE range from \$10.50 - \$33.50. Tickets may be purchased online at www.FirstStage.org or through the Marcus Center box office, 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.

ARTISTIC STAFF

John Maclay (Lake Zurich, IL) – Director / Associate Artistic Director / Academy Director

John has been with First Stage since 2003 and has most recently directed WITNESS, PETER AND THE WOLF, FERDINAND THE BULL, GREEN GABLES, and THE SHAKESPEARE STEALER. John has also directed productions of ROMEO AND JULIET and MACBETH for the Young Company, First Stage's pre-professional training program for high school students. As an actor, John has appeared in First Stage's A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD, THE QUILTMAKER'S GIFT, PERSEUS BAYOU, HOLES, and MIKE MULLIGAN AND HIS STEAM SHOVEL. In addition to working at First Stage, John serves as an adjunct faculty member of the UW-Milwaukee theatre department and has taught at Carroll College, Lawrence University, North Central College, and the Interlochen Arts Academy.

James Valcq (Mt. Vernon, NY) – Music Director

James returns to First Stage after SEUSSICAL and A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD. Broadway credits include CHICAGO, FLOWER DRUM SONG, CABARET and THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL. With Fred Alley, James wrote THE SPITFIRE GRILL (Playwrights Horizons, 2001) which won the Richard Rodgers Production Award and received Best Musical nominations from the Outer Critics Circle and Drama League and two Drama Desk nominations. It has since been produced almost 300 times all across the U.S., in Germany, South Korea, the UK, and currently in Japan (www.thespitifiregrill.com). James is the composer/author of ZOMBIES FROM THE BEYOND, which opened Off-Broadway to critical acclaim in 1995. Other conducting credits include Maurice Sendak's production of REALLY ROSIE, Indiana Repertory Theatre's SHE LOVES ME and The Skylight's PRODUCERS, CANDIDE, and SOUTH PACIFIC. Most recently, James has returned to acting, playing the role of Cosme McMoon in SOUVENIR at the Boise Contemporary Theatre and American Stage in Florida.

Diane LeMense (Milwaukee) – Choreographer

Dancer, teacher and choreographer, Diana LeMense grew up in Green Bay and Barcelona, Spain. She began her dance studies at the Makaroff School of Ballet in Appleton and her performance career with Wisconsin Ballet Theater. In the years since she has dedicated herself to the study of a variety of dance forms, movement traditions and somatic practices including ballet, modern, West African, flamenco, American folk dance, yoga, and Pilates. As a choreographer, teacher and performer, she draws regularly on these traditions. She obtained an MFA in dance from UWM and has taught for the Peck School of the Arts Dance Department since 2001. She also teaches contemporary and classical dance technique for the Milwaukee Ballet

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School and Danceworks, and is the Resident Choreographer and Chair of the Dance Department at Divine Savior Holy Angels High School (DSHA) in Milwaukee. Diana performs regularly for Danceworks Performance Company in Milwaukee and throughout Wisconsin as a guest artist. Diana's most recent choreographic credits include THE WIZ for DSHA, and RESONANCE, collaboration with digital media artist, Dale Kaminski, and musician/composer, Colin O'Brien.

Mark Hare (Milwaukee) – Scenic Designer / Props Director

Mark currently serves as First Stage's props director. In addition to his props master duties, Mark has designed scenery for First Stage's 12 DAYS – A MILWAUKEE CHRISTMAS, IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE, CLICK CLACK MOO: COWS THAT TYPE, AND THEN THEY CAME FOR ME: REMEMBERING THE WORLD OF ANNE FRANK, TWO DONUTS, MUFARO'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS, SEUSSICAL, and puppet design for THE NEVERENDING STORY and THE BFG. Mark also designed scenery and props for BUNNICULA. For the past eleven summer seasons, Mark has been the props master for American Players Theatre.

Tina Campbell (Kansas City, MO) – Costume Designer

Tina is very pleased to be back at First Stage as designer for HOW I BECAME A PIRATE. Tina has been designing at First Stage for almost ten years, and some of her favorite credits are TOM SAWYER, THE BFG, THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER, and 12 DAYS – A MILWAUKEE CHRISTMAS. She and her children are HUGE fans of the books that inspired this show, so she is doubly excited to be a part of this project.

Holly Blomquist (Milwaukee) – Lighting Designer

Holly's lighting design work this season includes RABBIT HOLE at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, THE DIG at Renaissance Theaterworks, and OLD WICKED SONGS at In Tandem Theatre. Past favorites include EDUCATING RITA at The Berkshire Theatre Festival, Madison Repertory Theatre's THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK, THE INTERNATIONALIST at Boulevard Ensemble Theatre, THE SOUND OF MUSIC at Cardinal Stritch University, and UW-Madison's URINETOWN: THE MUSICAL. Holly currently serves as architectural lighting designer for Harwood Engineering Consultants, Ltd. in Wauwatosa. Holly has an MFA in theatre from UW-Madison, was the recipient of the 2007 Young Lighting Designer Award given by the United States Institute for Theatre Technology, and also received the 2008 Standing 'O' Award given by Apollo Design Technologies.

Ernie Brusubardis (Shorewood) – Sound Designer

Ernie composed music and served as music director/sound designer for First Stage productions of CHARLOTTE'S WEB, SLEEPING BEAUTY, HANA'S SUITCASE, BUNNICULA, SMOLDERING FIRES, THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF SANTA CLAUS, THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF CHARLOTTE DOYLE, BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA and THE BFG, to name a few. He has spent his entire life making music. Born in Latvia, Ernie started playing the piano at age five. When he came to Milwaukee, he continued his studies, earning a BA and MA from the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music. He has conducted symphony orchestras, including the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. Ernie has been a choral conductor, a teacher at University School and music director for many Milwaukee theaters. His compositions include several musicals, CD releases and soundtracks for theater.

ACTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Lee Becker (Milwaukee) – Sharktooth

Lee enthusiastically returns to First Stage and this delightful chance to work with good friends, especially Bo Johnson, who taught him everything he knows. Fans will remember Lee as the lonely, misunderstood Bear in First Stage's THE QUILTMAKER'S GIFT. Since then he's kept out of trouble playing the title role in Madison Repertory Theatre's THE NERD, spending another magical summer under the stars with American Folklore Theatre (AFT) in Door County, and touring around a wintry Wisconsin in GUYS ON ICE with the Milwaukee Repertory Theater. Lee has also worked with The Skylight, Cornerstone Theatre, In Tandem Theatre, Bunny Gumbo's Combat Theatre, and ComedySportz - Madison, NYC and Milwaukee. When not onstage, Lee does some playwriting and is proud to announce the World Premiere of GUYS & DOES, a deer-hunting musical comedy co-written with Fred "Doc" Heide and composer, Paul Libman, coming to AFT this fall.

Todd Denning (Cudahy) – Braid Beard

Todd is thrilled to be back with First Stage, most recently he was seen in THE NEVERENDING STORY and CHARLOTTE'S WEB. Todd is a theatre artist who lives and works in Milwaukee as an actor, director, teacher, fight choreographer and sound designer/engineer. He has acted in several First Stage productions including TOM SAWYER, A MIDNIGHT CRY and CHARLOTTE DOYLE. First Stage directing credits include THE QUILTMAKER'S GIFT; GIGGLE, GIGGLE QUACK and numerous Company Class and Young Company productions. Todd is a part-time faculty member at Marquette University and is currently the co-director of the Young Company of the First Stage Theater Academy, along with John Maclay. Todd received his MFA in acting from the University of California-Irvine. Other regional acting credits include Utah Shakespearean Festival, South Coast Repertory, Georgia Shakespeare, Tennessee Repertory Theatre, and Milwaukee Shakespeare.

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Bo Johnson (Milwaukee) – Max

Prior to HOW I BECAME A PIRATE, Bo was on stage in WELL at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, followed by CHARLOTTE'S WEB at First Stage. Bo's other First Stage credits include SLEEPING BEAUTY, LILLY'S PURPLE PLASTIC PURSE, A CHRISTMAS STORY, BUNNICULA, MISS NELSON IS MISSING! THE UGLY DUCKLING, ANIMAL FARM, as well as many others. Bo has served as technical director, production manager, and props master for First Stage. He currently enjoys spending his summers teaching for the First Stage Theater Academy. Look for him next holiday season in the remount of WHO KILLED SANTA, the hysterical puppet show that he and Dan Katula produced last Christmas. You might also catch him singing and playing rhythm guitar in the band, Random Maxx, or with his good friend Laurie Birmingham in the acoustic duo - Inspired.

John Nicholson (Milwaukee) - Braunschwagger

John is happy to be returning to First Stage after previously appearing in A MIDNIGHT CRY. He has also enjoyed performing in several productions with Milwaukee's Renaissance Theaterworks, including RED PEPPER JELLY 1-3. John has been performing traditional American Blues, Folk and Celtic styles of music for many years. He plays and tours regularly with his wife Susan with the Milwaukee-based group Frogwater. John teaches guitar for the UWM School of Continuing Education and Irish Fest School of music.

Susan Nicholson (Milwaukee) – Female Pirate

Susan is excited to be making her debut with First Stage Children's Theater in HOW I BECAME A PIRATE. She began to explore traditional "peoples music" after being classically trained on violin as a child. She enjoys the challenge of trying different kinds of music, and has performed and recorded with various local talents. Joining forces with John Nicholson, the group Frogwater was "hatched." Combining musical styles of Celtic, old-time American, and Blues, Frogwater has been honored many times receiving local and state-wide awards. Susan has enjoyed her involvement with Renaissance Theaterworks, including composing and performing original material for their production of RED PEPPER JELLY 1-3.

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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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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