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SETTING THE STAGE FOR SUCCESSION

After 25 years of transforming lives through theater Rob Goodman, founding artistic director and managing director of First Stage, announces plans to transition out of his current role

Milwaukee, WI – As First Stage embarks on its 25th season, the organization prepares for a significant transition. Carol Gehl, Godfrey & Kahn partner and First Stage board president announces Founding Artistic Director and current Managing Director Rob Goodman will begin transitioning out of his current role throughout the 2011-12 season. Goodman, a long-time arts and theatre education advocate, was selected by the Milwaukee Performing Arts Center to develop First Stage in 1987. Under his leadership First Stage has grown to become one of the largest theater companies for young people and families in the nation, the second-largest theater company in Milwaukee and the only theater arts education program of its kind in the nation. Gehl said, “Rob’s strong vision of using theater arts to develop character and leadership skills in children built First Stage into an institution that is now a Cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF) and is essential to the quality of life for our community’s children and families.”

Board, staff and key investors and partners of the community developed an intensive Strategic Succession Plan in 2010, examining the core mission, values and culture that make First Stage unique. This plan prepares a framework for First Stage’s growth over the next five to ten years and a process for the transition. The board formed a search committee who has begun the search for a new managing director. Bob Arzbaeher, CEO of Actuant Corporation and chair of the search committee said, “It is clear that finding the right person for the organization will be crucial. The ability to partner with long time First Stage Artistic Director Jeff Frank to build on the vision of using theater for positive transformational change in our children, schools and families as well as the culture of inclusivity at First Stage is an exciting opportunity that we are looking forward to.”

Goodman will remain with First Stage in an emeritus role working on an arts education capitalization campaign to provide all children in our community the opportunity to access First Stage’s theater shows, its Theater Academy or participate in educational programs that use theater to improve academic performance and build character. Goodman said, “First Stage is a positive solution for young people that engage in our programs. By broadening our reach and providing access to more young people over the next 25 years, we can have a direct impact on the myriad of challenges facing young people and families in our community. All it takes is access.”

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About Rob Goodman

Rob Goodman has been a director and producer of professional theater, a patron and supporter of the arts, an arts education advocate, and a pivotal member of Milwaukee's performing arts community for over 35 years.

Goodman was hired by the Milwaukee Performing Arts Center board of directors to found First Stage in 1987. Under his leadership First Stage has grown to become one of the largest theater companies for young people and families in the nation, the third-largest theater company in Milwaukee and the only theater arts education program of its kind in the nation. During his tenure at First Stage Goodman directed over 50 productions and commissioned over 40 new plays, working with such playwrights as Charles Strouse, Robert Schenkkan, Harry Connick, Jr., Stephen Schwartz, James DeVita, Kermit Frazier, Stephen Dietz, Kevin Kling, and Y York.

In 2003, Goodman led First Stage's collaboration with the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra on a \$15 million capital campaign to create the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center. He led in the creation of Milwaukee Arts Partners (MAP), a consortium of Milwaukee's largest performing arts groups including Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, the Milwaukee Repertory Theater and the Florentine Opera Company that collaborate through the development and use of Tessitura, a leading customer relationship management system. Goodman is currently serves on the board of directors of Tessitura Network, Inc.

In July 2011, Goodman was honored with the 2011 Orlin Corey Medallion Award by the Children's Theatre Foundation of America. The award honors significant achievements contributing to the cultural enrichment of children and youth through nurturing artistic work in theatre.

Goodman has served as vice president of TYA/USA, the national association of theatre for children and young people; on the board of City Ballet and Acacia Theater; directed at various local colleges, and is a member of Actors Equity Association and the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers. He is a Vietnam veteran, was a navigator for an arctic expedition in 1971, and was ordained a Deacon in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee in 1990. Rob and his wife Mary married in 1969; they have four children and four grandchildren.

About First Stage

Celebrating its 25th anniversary in the 2011-12 season, First Stage touches hearts, engages minds, and transforms lives by creating extraordinary theater experiences for young people and families through professional theater productions that inspire, enlighten, and entertain; unparalleled Theater Academy training that fosters life skills through stage skills; and dynamic Theater in Education programs that promote active learning in our schools and community. First Stage is a member of 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). More information at www.firststage.org

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