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Contact Lisa Elias 414.267.2944

lelias@firststage.org

First Stage Children's Theater shares a
fantasy adventure that captures the
magical dream of childhood in

The Neverending Story

Based on the novel by Michael Ende
Adapted by David S. Craig

Directed by Jeff Frank

Sponsored by Northwestern Mutual Foundation

March 6 – April 5, 2009
Todd Wehr Theater, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts

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

Milwaukee, Wis. (February 6, 2009) – Based on the novel by Michael Ende, young Bastian, a lonely, solitary boy, steps through the pages of a book into a magical, imaginary land in First Stage Children's Theater's presentation of THE NEVERENDING STORY. The show runs March 6 through April 5 at the Todd Wehr Theater in the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, 929 N. Water Street in downtown Milwaukee.

Adapted for stage by David S. Craig, First Stage Children's Theater brings to life this captivating fantasy about Bastian, a bullied, daydreaming boy who escapes his lonely reality by losing himself in the pages of a thrilling book. There he discovers the land of Fantastica, a beautiful place being threatened by an all-consuming Nothing. In

- more -

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Fantastica, the Childlike Empress sends a young warrior named Atreyu, a boy of Bastian's age, on a quest to find someone to save Fantastica and its cast of characters. Atreyu sets off on an adventure through the magical land where he encounters the Swamp of Sadness, a creepy cave of a gigantic spider, and the wondrous maze of the Southern Oracle. Aided by fabulous Falkor, the flying Luck Dragon, Atreyu manages to survive the dangerous trek through Fantastica, narrowly defeating the menacing werewolf trying to destroy imagination itself. Despite his valiant efforts, Atreyu cannot save the day. In the end it is Bastian, through his wholehearted belief in the story, who becomes the hero in THE NEVERENDING STORY.

In the tradition of *The Lord of the Rings* and *Chronicles of Narnia*, production of this epic adventure requires equal parts technical theatre wizardry and theatre imagination, according to First Stage Artistic Director Jeff Frank, who also directs the show. "We have an extraordinary collection of creatures that come alive in this production. The puppets designed by Mark Hare are incredible – from the cranky, but lovable Gnomics Urgl and Engywook to an intricate, five-person malevolent Spider to a despairing Troll, who's minus his bottom half thanks to the Nothing." Frank goes on to say, "There is a spectacular moment when Atreyu flies through the Wind Giants with Falkor the Luck Dragon. The entire set becomes a virtual puppet itself as the Nothing threatens to destroy all of all of Fantastica."

First Stage's THE NEVERENDING STORY is an adventure like none other. "I expect audiences young and old to be swept up on an amazing journey with Bastian and Atreyu and all the other fantastic characters they meet," says Frank.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Andreas Helmuth Ende, a German writer of fantasy and children's literature, was born in 1929 in Bavaria, Germany.

He was one of the most popular and famous German authors of the 20th century, mostly due to the enormous success of his children's books. However, Ende was not strictly a children's author, as he also wrote books for adults. Ende claimed, "It is for this child in me, and in all of us, that I tell my stories," and that "my books are for any child between 8

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and 80 years.” Ende’s writing could be described as a surreal mixture of reality and fantasy. The reader is often invited to take a more interactive role in the story, and the worlds of his books often mirror our reality, using fantasy to bring light to the problems of an increasingly technological modern society.

Die unendliche Geschichte (The Neverending Story) is Ende’s best known work. Other books include *Momo* and *Jim Knopf und Lukas der Lokomotivfuhrer (Jim Button and Luke the Engine Driver)*. Michael Ende’s works have been translated into more than 40 languages and sold more than 20 million copies, and have been adapted into motion pictures, stage plays, operas and audio books.

ARTISTIC STAFF

Director	Jeff Frank
Scenic Designer	David Minkoff
Costume Designer	Debbie Baer
Lighting Designer	Keith Parham
Sound Designer	Victoria Delorino
Props Director / Puppet Designer	Mark Hare
Fight Director	John Maclay

ADULT ACTORS

Witch / Morla / Urg / Maya / Ensemble	McKinley Carter*
Bastian’s Father / Gmork / Ensemble	Todd Denning*
Bookseller / Chancellor / Engywook / Sheerek	Allen Edge*
Cairon / Troll / Falkor / Ensemble	Joe Foust*
Nighthob / Ygramul / Uyulala / Ensemble	Marti Gobel
Caretaker / Artax / Lirr / Ensemble	Tim Linn

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

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YOUNG ACTORS

Bastian

Atreyu

Empress

Fairy

Attendant / Sass Adult

Bully #1

Bully #2

Bully #3

Bully #4

Imagination Cast

Steven Long
Bayside

Ryan Tutton
Shorewood

Allison Yurkowitz
Whitefish Bay

Anna Wolfe
Shorewood

Conner Mills
Greendale

Kyle Conner
Wauwatosa

Christian Adams
Milwaukee

Sydney Rooney
Elm Grove

Becca Corazzi
West Bend

Adventure Cast

Thomas Mazza
Oak Creek

Mack Folkert
Pewaukee

Emily Newmark
Janesville

Hannah Obst
Brookfield

Cole Hines
Milwaukee

Josiah Williams
Milwaukee

Christian Siebert
Milwaukee

Haley Olig
Brookfield

Jacalyn Nolan
Oconomowoc

PERFORMANCE DATES

THE NEVERENDING STORY opens Friday, March 6 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, April 5 will be interpreted for the deaf and hard of hearing patrons. The full schedule of family performances includes:

Fridays: March 6, 27 and April 3 at 7:00 p.m.

Saturdays: March 7, 21 and April 4 at 7:00 p.m.

March 14, 28 and April 4 at 1:00 and 3:30 p.m.

Sundays: March 8, 15, 22, 29 and April 5 at 1:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

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TICKET INFORMATION

Ticket prices for WITNESS range from \$10.50 - \$33.50. Tickets may be purchased online at 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

Jeff Frank (Wauwatosa) – Director

Jeff has been First Stage's artistic director since February 2003. Previously he had served as First Stage's education director/associate artistic director. Jeff is a native of Wisconsin who earned a BFA in theater from UW-Whitewater and went on to the University of Utah, earning a MFA in child drama. Over the past several seasons, Jeff has directed many productions including GOSSAMER, SLEEPING BEAUTY, 12 DAYS – A MILWAUKEE CHRISTMAS, TUCK EVERLASTING, THUMBELINA, TOM SAWYER, SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON, LILLY'S PURPLE PLASTIC PURSE, A LITTLE HOUSE CHRISTMAS, THE HOBBIT, A MIDNIGHT CRY, THE MAGIC MRS. PIGGLE-WIGGLE! THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER, HOLES, MISS NELSON IS MISSING! and PERSEUS BAYOU.

David Minkoff (Santa Fe, NM) – Scenic Designer

Freelance scenic designer David Minkoff has served as professor of scenic design and resident designer at the College of Santa Fe in New Mexico, as resident scenic designer and visiting professor of theatre at Indiana University, South Bend and as the technical director for the visual arts program at the University of Chicago. His Theatre and Graphic design work has been featured throughout Europe and the United States. David's designs have been recognized for awards in Honolulu for OVER MY DEAD BODY as well as the Kabuki play THE SUMMER FESTIVAL: A MIRROR OF OSAKA, in Sacramento, for THE LOVE SUICIDES AT SONEZAKI, and in San Francisco at the first US Red Bull Flugtag (flying design competition!). David is delighted to return to First Stage, where he most recently designed the sets for HANA'S SUITCASE, THE GIVER, and SIDEWAYS STORIES FROM WAYSIDE SCHOOL.

Debbie Baer (Chicago) - Costume Designer

Chicago design credits include: SHORT SHAKESPEARS! MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM and FUNK IT UP ABOUT NOTHIN' at Chicago Shakespeare Theatre; FIRST LOOK REPERTORY OF NEW WORK and HUCK FINN at Steppenwolf Theatre Company; ROSE AND THE RIME, THE ATTEMPTERS, THE NUTCRACKER, and

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DAVE DAVINCI SAVES THE UNIVERSE at The House Theatre of Chicago; REMEMBER ME LIKE THIS, AQUI ESTOY, GOD'S WORK, and NUMBER 9, LEAVES GROWING TREES at Albany Park Theatre Project; THE PUPPETMASTER OF LODZ at Writers' Theatre; and YOUNG LADY FROM RWANDA at Victory Gardens Theatre. Off-Broadway, she designed for WHEN THE MESSENGER IS HOT at 59E59 Theatres. Debbie was an invited designer at the Lincoln Center Director's Lab and is a company member of the House Theatre of Chicago.

Keith Parham (Chicago) – Lighting Designer

Keith Parham is happy to be working with First Stage Children's Theater for the first time. He is a company member of TUTA Theatre, where recent credits include MARIA'S FIELD, ROMEO AND JULIET, UNCLE VANYA, IT'S ONLY THE END OF THE WORLD, TRACKS, HUDDERSFIELD, STILL LIFE IN COLOR, and RULES FOR GOOD MANNERS IN THE MODERN WORLD (Chicago and New York). Other credits include FUTURE ME with SPF at The Public Theatre, CRIME AND PUNISHMENT (Off-Broadway), PICNIC and NIXON'S NIXON with Writers' Theatre, ADDING MACHINE: A MUSICAL OFF-BROAD and GAS FOR LESS at the Goodman Theatre, CARTER'S WAY and SUNSET LIMITED (Chicago, Off-Broadway and Ireland), REDLIGHT WINTER (Chicago, Off-Broadway), THE ELEPHANT MAN, HUCK FINN, MASTER HAROLD, AND HAROLD AND THE BOYS at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, 9 PARTS OF DESIRE and THE ADDING MACHINE at Next Theatre (Associate Artist), MILLION DOLLARE QUARTET at The Apollo Theater and the Goodman Theatre (with Dee Gee Theatricals), and DON'T DRESS FOR DINNER and RUSSIAN ON THE SIDE at The Royal George Theatre. He has also designed numerous shows for companies including Northlight Theatre, Milwaukee Shakespeare, Timeline Theatre (Associate Artist), Lookingglass Theatre Company, Chicago Dramatists, Chicago Opera Theatre, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, European Repertory Theatre, Rivendell Theatre Ensemble and Theatre Wit.

Victoria "Toy" Delorio (Chicago) – Sound Designer

Victoria is thrilled to be making her First Stage debut. Other Milwaukee sound design credits include: CYMBELINE and 2HENRYIV at Milwaukee Shakespeare; RABBIT HOLE and TALKING HEADS at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre; and THE PERSIANS at Renaissance Theatre Group. Off-Broadway credits include: THE BLUEST EYE with Steppenwolf Theatre at the Duke Theatre, and OPHELIA with the New York City Fringe Fest at The Connelly, in addition to sound designing for Primary Stages, Urban Stages, Ensemble Studio Theatre, and the Actor's Studio Theatre. Regionally, she has worked with the Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, L.A. Theatre Works, Victory Gardens Theatre, Geva Theatre and People's Light and Theatre. She has been nominated for seven Jeff Awards, receiving three for THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU,

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AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS, and THE SHADOW (both with Lifeline Theatre) and has received two After Dark Awards for THE SHADOW and FIDDLER ON THE ROOF (Light Opera Works). Victoria is the head of Sound Design and Technology at The Theatre School of DePaul University.

Mark Hare (Milwaukee) – Props Director

Mark currently serves as First Stage's props master. In addition to his props master duties, Mark designed scenery for First Stage's CHARLOTTE'S WEB, 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 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.

John Maclay (Lake Zurich, IL) – Fight 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.

ACTOR BIOGRAPHIES

McKinley Carter (Chicago, IL) – Witch / Morla / Urg / Maya / Ensemble

McKinley Carter is pleased to return to First Stage where she last performed in PERSEUS BAYOU. Chicago credits include: JOHN AND JEN at Apple Tree Theatre; TURN OF THE CENTURY, THE MAMET FESTIVAL, THE VISIT, and FLOYD COLLINS at the Goodman Theatre; FORBIDDEN BROADWAY at The Royal George Theatre; WINESBURG, OHIO at Steppenwolf Theatre Company; INTO THE WOODS at Marriott Theatre; JAMES JOYCES' THE DEAD, and CYMBELINE AND PERICLES at Court Theatre; SOMETHING'S AFOOT, and SUPERMAN at Drury Lane Oakbrook Terrace; A

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MID SUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, HENRY IV PARTS I AND II, and ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. She was a founding member Child's Play Theatre in Minneapolis where she caught the theatre bug as a kid.

Todd Denning (Cudahy) – Bastian's Father / Gmork / Ensemble

Todd is thrilled to be back with First Stage, having most recently appeared in CHARLOTTE'S WEB, and having directed First Stage's production of THE QUILTMAKER'S GIFT last year. He has been a teacher for First Stage's Theater Academy, a fight choreographer, a stage manager, and has acted in several productions including TOM SAWYER, A MIDNIGHT CRY and CHARLOTTE DOYLE. Todd has directed Classical Company productions for the Theater Academy including this summer's production of MACBETH. He is currently co-director of the Theater Academy's Young Company with Theater Academy Director and Associate Artistic Director John Maclay. Todd received his MFA in acting from the University of CA – Irvine. His regional acting credits include Utah Shakespearean Festival, South Coast Repertory, Georgia Shakespeare, Tennessee Repertory Theater and Milwaukee Shakespeare.

Allen Edge (Milwaukee) – Bookseller / Chancellor / Engywook / Sheerek

Allen is happy to return to First Stage after recently appearing in CHARLOTTE'S WEB. Allen is an ordained minister, a talented actor, director, producer, and stand-up comedian with over 38 years in the performing arts. He had worked with the Goodman Theatre, the Black Ensemble Theatre Company, and the Steppenwolf Theatre Company. Allen has performed his special brand of humor at the Comedy Café in Milwaukee, the Apollo Theatre in New York and as the opening act for Patti La Belle. He was also featured in a number of commercials and films, including *Barber Shop 2* and Tyler Perry's *Meet The Browns*. Allen has a Bachelors of Arts degree in Theatre from Columbia College Chicago. He is also the founder and president of Transitions Edge Productions, Inc.

Joe Foust (Chicago) – Carion / Troll / Falkor / Ensemble

Joe returns to First Stage after appearing in The Shakespeare Stealer. Regional credits include HAMLET at Nevermore Theatre; five productions with Milwaukee Shakespeare; KABUKI ACHILLES at People's Light and Theatre Company; THE WINTER'S TALE at Missouri Repertory Theatre; ROMEO AND JULIET at River Styx, London; and ten seasons acting and directing with Peninsula Players. Chicago acting credits include WHAT THE BUTLER SAW and ENDGAME at Court Theatre; THE BEARD OF AVON at the Goodman Theatre; MOTHER COURAGE and HER CHILDREN at Steppenwolf Theatre Company; KABUKI MEDEA at Wisdom Bridge Arts Project; THE SEAGULL and

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MAJOR BARBARA at Remy Bumpo Theatre Company; ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ANARCHIST at Next Act Theatre Company; SANTALAND DIARIES at Theatre Wit; fourteen productions with Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, where favorites include: THE WINTER'S TALE, HAMLET, TIMON OF ATHENS, TWELFTH NIGHT, and HENRY IV PARTS II and III; and three seasons with Oak Park Festival Theatre. Mr. Foust is a founding member of Defiant Theatre, where credits include directing and co-writing ACTION MOVIE: THE PLAY AND UBU RAW.

Marti Gobel (Fort Atkinson) – Nightnob / Ygramul / Uyulala / Ensemble

Marti begins a new adventure with First Stage with THE NEVERENDING STORY. This project offers an opportunity to relive some of the precious moments of her own childhood, while bringing the wonder of imagination to an audience of all ages. Marti has performed in Milwaukee Chamber Theater's production of WELL, and Renaissance Theatreworks production of THE PERSIANS. Marti will return to Milwaukee Chamber Theater this summer in AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS.

Tim Linn (Milwaukee) – Caretaker / Artax / Lirr / Ensemble

Tim is a local Milwaukee actor honored to be returning to First Stage as an adult actor after having performed in five productions with the company in his youth. Other credits include some time at American Players Theatre in Spring Green and eight productions with Milwaukee Shakespeare. Tim also works as a carpenter both for the theatre and the community at large, has a new baby at home, and associates himself with the urban agriculture movement.

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 (UPAF).

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