



FIRST STAGE

CHILDREN'S THEATER • INSCHOOL EDUCATION • THEATER ACADEMY

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**The Tony® award-winning musical THE WIZ, in a new adaptation by
First Stage Children's Theater specifically for family audiences,
makes its premiere March 5**

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

Book by William F. Brown

Music and lyrics by Charlie Smalls

Additional material by Tina Tippit

Orchestrations by Richard Carsey

Directed by Tony Horne

Media sponsor: Fox 6

**Todd Wehr Theater, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts
March 5 – 28, 2010**

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

Milwaukee, Wis. (February 1, 2010) – First Stage Children's Theater brings the classic story "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" to life in this new musical with a modern, soulful twist. THE WIZ runs March 5 through March 28, 2010 at the Todd Wehr Theater in the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, 929 N. Water Street in downtown Milwaukee. Tickets can be purchased in person at the Marcus Center Box Office at 929 N. Water Street, by phone at (414) 273-7206 or online at www.FirstStage.org.

First Stage has adapted THE WIZ from the original 1975 Broadway musical to this new Theater for Young Audiences (TYA) production, including new orchestrations of the original classics such as "Home," "Ease on Down the Road," and "Believe in Yourself."

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First Stage premieres new version of THE WIZ/add one

This TYA adaptation, along with its exclusive soundtrack recorded by First Stage, will be made available for production by other children's theaters throughout the country. The original Broadway adaptation won seven Tony® awards, including "Best Musical."

"Given our success in developing new material for the stage, the Susan Gurman Agency approached us about developing the TYA adaptation of THE WIZ," said Jeff Frank, First Stage artistic director. "It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with William Brown to adapt this treasured classic for the family audiences of Milwaukee and ultimately the entire country," Frank continued. "The principles of self-respect and of believing in yourself are cornerstones of the work we do every day with young people. The show is a great fit for us."

THE WIZ is based on the beloved story "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," written in 1900 by L. Frank Baum. Much of the plot from the book is similar, yet the characters are more contemporary than what most know from the book and its subsequent 1939 film.

Dorothy and her dog Toto are swept up in a tornado, sending them far from their home in Kansas to the land of Oz. The Munchkins are overjoyed to find that Dorothy's house has landed smack upon Evvavmene, the Wicked Witch of the East. In order to return home to Kansas, Dorothy heads to the Emerald City to see the Wiz. Dorothy meets new friends along the way – the Scarecrow, Tinman, and the momma's boy Lion – who join Dorothy on her journey to seek out their one great wish. The foursome find themselves in an unforgettable adventure, in which each of the friends discover the power of believing in themselves to make their wishes come true.

Director Tony Horne is a native of Memphis, Tenn. whose work encompasses education, arts management, performance, direction and choreography. He holds a BFA

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First Stage premieres new version of THE WIZ/add two

in Musical Theatre Dance from United States University, an MBA in arts management from UCLA and an MFA in directing from the University of Memphis. Favorite directing credits include HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS..., SPUNK and A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC. His production of Charles Mee's BIG LOVE won four Memphis Theatre Awards (known as the Ostrander Awards) in the College Division, including awards for Direction of a Drama, Movement Design and Best Drama. His production of the revue BLUES IN THE NIGHT won three Ostrander Awards including an award for Excellence in Musical Theatre. Most recently, his 2007 production of CRUMBS FROM THE TABLE OF JOY won an Ostrander Award for Ensemble Acting.

Currently Assistant Professor of Directing and Musical Theatre at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, Tony has also served on the faculties of Northwestern University, Bowling Green State University, Rhodes College, University of Tulsa and St Louis University.

Author Lyman Frank Baum (May 15, 1856 – May 6, 1919) was a U.S. author, poet, playwright, actor and independent filmmaker best known today as the creator – along with illustrator WW Denslow – of one of the most popular books in U.S. children's literature, "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." He wrote 13 sequels, nine other fantasy novels and a plethora of other works (55 novels in total, plus four "lost" novels), 82 short stories, over 200 poems, an unknown number of scripts and many miscellaneous writings), and made numerous attempts to bring his works to the stage and screen. His works predicted such century-later commonplaces as television, laptop computers ("The Master Key"), wireless telephones ("Tik-Tok of Oz"), and the ubiquity of advertising on clothing ("Aunt Jane's Nieces at Work").

The adult actor cast of THE WIZ includes **Sheri Williams-Pannell** (as Aunt Em/Glinda), **Ron Lee** (member of Actor's Equity Association, the union of professional Actors and

First Stage premieres new version of THE WIZ/add three

Stage Managers, as Uncle Henry/The Wiz), **Jackson Evans** (member of Actor's Equity Association, the union of professional Actors and Stage Managers, as Scarecrow), **Parrish Collier** (member of Actor's Equity Association, the union of professional Actors and Stage Managers, as Tin Man), **David Weaver** (as Lion), **Tiffany Cox** (as Addaperle), and **Ericka Wade** (as Evilene).

Young performer roles are double-cast. The young performers in the "Glitter" cast of THE WIZ includes **Zaire Adams** (as Munchkin 1) from Milwaukee; **Natalie Alteri** (as Munchkin 2) from Brookfield; **Joel Boyd** (as Ensemble 1) from Milwaukee; **Marrissa Clayton** (as Ensemble 8) from Waukesha; **Sophie Cohen** (as Munchkin 4) from Bayside; **Mina DeWalt** (as Ensemble 7) from Milwaukee; **Jimmie Harris** (as Ensemble 6) from Milwaukee; **Andrew McKee** (as Ensemble 2) from Milwaukee; **Laura Mesrobian** (as Ensemble 5) from Whitefish Bay; **Anika Otero** (as Munchkin 5) from Milwaukee; **Ashley Patin** (as Ensemble 4) from Whitefish Bay; **Zoe Powell** (as Munchkin 6) from Menomonee Falls; **Emily Riesterer** (as Munchkin 3) from Germantown; **Rachel Schmeling** (as Munchkin 7) from Brookfield; **Alyssa Sylvester** (as Dorothy) from Racine; and **Holland White** (as Ensemble 3) from Malone, Wis.

The young performers in the "Gold" cast of THE WIZ includes **Alec Aldred** (as Ensemble 3) from Waukesha; **Cole Hines** (as Munchkin 1) from Milwaukee; **Matthew Lewis** (as Ensemble 1) from Milwaukee; **Mary Nink** (as Munchkin 5) from Wauwatosa; **Emily Pogorelc** (as Munchkin 7) from Milwaukee; **Keelee Roggenbuck** (as Ensemble 6) from Milwaukee; **Stefan Romero** (as Ensemble 2) from Elm Grove; **Kaitlyn Serketich** (as Ensemble 7) from Franklin; **Imani Smith** (as Munchkin 4) from Milwaukee; **Erin Stapleton** (as Ensemble 4) from Wauwatosa; **Lexi Stecker Janssen** (as Munchkin 2) from Milwaukee; **Jade Taylor** (as Dorothy) from Milwaukee; **Emilie Thomas** (as Ensemble 8) from Pewaukee; **Abby Thompson** (as Munchkin 6) from Milwaukee; **Kelly Venable** (as Ensemble 5) from Mequon and **Jenna Verstegen-Ehlinger** (as Munchkin 3)

First Stage premieres new version of THE WIZ/add four

from Richfield.

The Artistic Staff for THE WIZ includes: **Richard Carsey** (Music Director), **Collette Pollard, USAA** (Scenic Designer), **Debbie Baer** (Costume Designer), **Jason Fassl** (Lighting Designer), **Jason Knox** (Sound Designer), **Shell Benjamin** (Choreographer), **Mark Hare** (Props Director), **Sarah Hoffmann** (Production Stage Manager, member of Actor's Equity Association, the union of professional Actors and Stage Managers) and **Sarah Sherwood** (Assistant Stage Manager).

Tickets for THE WIZ start at \$10.50. Tickets may be purchased online at www.FirstStage.org or through the Marcus Center box office, in person at 929 N. Water Street in downtown Milwaukee or by phone (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.

Performance dates: THE WIZ opens Friday, March 5 at 7:00 p.m. Other performances are held: Saturday, March 6 at 3:30 and 7:00 p.m.; Sunday, March 7 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.; Friday, March 12 at 7:00 p.m.; Saturday, March 13 at 1:00 and 3:30 p.m.; Sunday, March 14 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.; Saturday, March 20 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.; Sunday, March 21 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.; Saturday, March 27 at 1:00 and 3:30 p.m. and Sunday, March 28 at 1:00 and 3:30 p.m. The performance on Sunday, March 28 at 3:30 p.m. is interpreted for the deaf and hard of hearing patrons.

Special events for THE WIZ

Opening weekend: Friday, March 5 through Sunday, March 7: Immediately following our opening weekend performances, a drawing for special "Wizard of Oz" themed item will be held. One winner at each performance will be selected.

Friday, March 5 at 7:00 p.m.: Following the opening night performance, First Stage

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First Stage premieres new version of THE WIZ/add five

invites all patrons to attend the Opening Night Reception at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, 325 W. Walnut Street, approximately one mile from the Marcus Center. Patrons will have the opportunity to meet and mingle with the cast and crew of THE WIZ while enjoying refreshments, courtesy of First Stage.

FACT SHEET

Theater: Todd Wehr Theater, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, 929 N. Water Street, downtown Milwaukee

Dates: Friday, March 5 through Sunday, March 28, 2010

Description: It's the timeless classic you know and love with a modern, soulful twist. Join Dorothy and her friends Scarecrow, Tinman and the Cowardly Lion on their fabulous journey as they ease on down the yellow brick road in an urban land of Oz. Adapted by First Stage for our audiences, this Tony® award-winning musical celebrates the power of believing in yourself.

Performances:

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Sunday, March 28 at 1:00 and 3:30 p.m.

Ticket prices: Start at \$10.50.

Tickets and information: Call (414) 273-7206 or online at www.FirstStage.org.

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 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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