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**FIRST STAGE THEATER ACADEMY TEAM PLACES SECOND
IN HIGH SCHOOL SHAKESPEAREAN ACTING COMPETITION**

MILWAUKEE, WIS. (October 9, 2008) – For the third consecutive year, the First Stage Theater Academy sent members of its Young Company to compete in the Utah Shakespearean Festival/Southern Utah University Shakespeare Competition, held Oct. 3-4 in Cedar City, Utah. The team of eight high school students from the Academy’s pre-professional training program for teens won second place overall for its division, as well as placing third for its ensemble scene, and – for the second year in a row – won the award for top junior in competition.

The Academy students participated alongside more than 2,500 young people from over 90 schools from Utah, Nevada, Arizona, California and Idaho. Their division encompassed all private schools, performing arts schools, non-traditional schools and groups associated with professional theaters. First Stage teens traveled the farthest for the competition.

Jolie LeBell and Jeremy Tardy, both of Milwaukee, won first place with their performance of a small scene from RICHARD III. This is Tardy’s second victory in the category.

Trevor Olds of Hartland received the Barbara Berrett Award, which is awarded to the junior with the highest individual score at the festival. Olds received a scholarship to the festival’s 10-day intensive summer theater program in 2009.

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First Stage Theater Academy places second/add one

The First Stage students, who were picked from among the Young Company's 40 members, spent the week in Utah taking acting workshops led by professional Shakespearean actors, performing for adjudicators and attending professional performances of Shakespeare's work.

"Participating in this competition is a great opportunity for these students to not only develop their craft, but to develop their skills succeeding under pressure," said John Maclay, First Stage Theater Academy Director. "The trophies are nice, but the real joy is watching the actors' work take the next step."

"We are thrilled that First Stage students travel every year to join us for this event," said Michael Bahr, Education Director of the Utah Shakespearean Festival. "Their performances are stellar in quality. I'm not surprised that these students consistently are awarded scholarships for their high quality performances."

The students' trip to the Utah Shakespearean Festival/Southern Utah University Shakespeare Competition was funded in part by the Kara Foundation.

Students who competed for First Stage Theater Academy, along with their schools, are: Jolie LeBell, a senior at Shorewood High School; Joe Mazza and Maddie Mandel, both home-schooled seniors; Devin Munger, a junior at Whitefish Bay High School; Gaby Nunez, a junior at Divine Savior Holy Angels High School; Trevor Olds, a junior at Arrowhead High School; Shanna Sweeney, a junior at Pewaukee High School; and Jeremy Tardy, a senior at Wauwatosa West High School.

First Stage Children's Theater is Milwaukee's premier, professional family theater. Founded in 1987, the mission of the company is to touch hearts and transform lives by creating exceptional theater experiences for young people and families through professional theater productions, theater academy training and dynamic in-school education programs. First Stage is a member of the Theater Wisconsin and Milwaukee Arts Partners, and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF).