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First Stage presents world premiere musical ELLA ENCHANTED

April 1 – May 1, 2016

Todd Wehr Theater, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts

Based on the book by Gail Carson Levine

Stage play and lyrics by Karen Zacarias

Music and additional lyrics by Deborah Wicks LaPuma

A world premiere co-commissioned by Adventure Theatre MTC in Glen Echo, Maryland (Michael J. Bobbitt, Producing Artistic Director) and First Stage in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Jeff Frank, Artistic Director)

Directed by John Maclay

This play is for everyone ages 6 and up.

Milwaukee, WI – First Stage presents a musical, magical fairy tale like no other with ELLA ENCHANTED – First Stage’s 56th world premiere to date. Performances take place April 1 – May 1, 2016 at the Marcus Center’s Todd Wehr Theater, located at 929 N. Water Street, 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.

Co-commissioned by Adventure Theatre MTC in Maryland, the story follows strong-willed Ella Frell as she embarks on an adventure to reverse a curse given to her at birth. First Stage Associate Artistic Director **John Maclay** directs as ELLA ENCHANTED makes its debut at the Marcus Center’s Todd Wehr Theater. “ELLA ENCHANTED is my new favorite musical fairy tale. It just does everything: it’s smart and funny and the music is a blast,” said Maclay. “I think audiences are going to go crazy for it and I truly believe it will go on to be a national hit. And it’s frankly pretty fun to be doing it first.”

John Maclay (Director) John Maclay is a professional actor, director, teacher and playwright who has spent the past 18 years working professionally in Milwaukee and beyond. At First Stage he serves as Associate Artistic Director and Director of the nationally renowned Young Company. John has directed over 25 Todd Wehr, First Steps and Young Company productions and has produced more than 50 shows

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First Stage presents ELLA ENCHANTED/add one

in First Stage's high school programs. John is also an active adaptor of literature for the stage, specializing in Theatre for Young Audiences. Two new works which he co-authored (ANATOLE with Lee Becker and James Valcq, and NANCY DREW AND THE BIGGEST CASE EVER co-authored with First Stage Artistic Director Jeff Frank) received their professional world premieres in the 2013-14 season. This year John enjoyed two more world premieres of his work. His adaptation of GERONIMO STILTON: MOUSE IN SPACE premiered at Oregon Children's Theatre in January of this year and JUST A LITTLE CRITTER MUSICAL (Music by Brett Ryback) premiered here at First Stage in February. Two additional world premieres of his work: GOOSEBUMPS THE MUSICAL: PHANTOM OF THE AUDITORIUM (with composer Danny Abosch) and ROBIN HOOD (co-written with Joe Foust) will open in the 2016-17 season. You may have also seen him act a few times at First Stage as anything from Shrek to Gepetto to Toad. Mr. Maclay is a proud member of Actor's Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers and a member of the Dramatist Guild. John holds degrees in theatre from Lawrence University and the University of Illinois.

The adult actor cast of ELLA ENCHANTED includes **Niffer Clarke** (Member of Actor's Equity Association) as Mother/Dame Olga; **Matt Daniels** (Member of Actor's Equity Association) as Sir Peter/Squire; **Bree Beelow** as Lucinda/Ogre; **Thomas J. Novak** as Ogre/Ensemble; **Ashley Jordan** (First Stage Teaching Artist Fellow) as Bird/Ensemble. Understudies include **Rae Paré** and **Eric Pfeiffer**.

Young performer roles are double cast. Young performers in the Spectacular Cast are **Alison Pogorelc** (as Ella) from Whitefish Bay; **Grace Becker** (as Hattie) from Hubertus; **Elizabeth Robbins** (as Olive) from Madison; **Max Pink** (as Char) from Milwaukee; **Stephanie Jarecki** (Ensemble) from Brookfield; **Heaven Lucas** (Ensemble) from Muskego; **Taylor Loomans** (Ensemble) from Slinger; **Amber Soik** (Ensemble) from Brookfield; **Benjamin Schulz** (Ensemble) from Germantown; **Nathan Kabara** (Ensemble) from Milwaukee; **Lindsay Nelsen** (as Young Ella) from Shorewood; and **Grace Fischer** (as Youngest Ella) from Menomonee Falls.

Young performers in the Brilliant Cast are **Taylor Kass** (as Ella) from Oconomowoc; **Madison Penzkover** (as Hattie) from Mukwonago; **Mari Duckler** (as Olive) from Mequon; **Cole Winston** (as Char) from Hartland; **Adelaide Schaetzke** (Ensemble) from Whitefish Bay; **Beatrice Rasmussen** (Ensemble) from Whitefish Bay; **Abigail Litjens** (Ensemble) from Elm Grove; **Chantae Miller** (Ensemble) from Waukesha; **Charles Kelley** (Ensemble) from Germantown; **Mason Sammarco** (Ensemble) from Bayside; **Mia Hartounian** (as Young Ella) from Franklin; and **Phinlee Clarkin** (as Youngest Ella) from Milwaukee.

The Artistic Staff for ELLA ENCHANTED includes: **Jeff Schaetzke** (Music Director); **Jessica Beth Redish**, SDC (Choreographer); **Thomas J. Novak** (Assistant Choreographer); **Jason Coale** (Scenic Designer); **Jason Fassel** (Lighting Designer); **Brandon Kirkham** (Costume Designer); **Matt Whitmore** (Sound Designer); **Melissa L. Wanke** (Stage Manager) and **Lauren Gingold** (Assistant Stage Manager).

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First Stage presents ELLA ENCHANTED/add two

Tickets start at \$15. Tickets may be purchased 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.

Group Sales – Groups of 10 or more receive 15% off main floor, regular single ticket prices on most First Stage performances at the Marcus Center’s Todd Wehr Theater. Call (414) 267-2964 or email groups@firststage.org for more information.

Special events for ELLA ENCHANTED

Friday, April 1: Opening Night Reception – Following the opening night performance, First Stage invites all patrons to attend the Opening Night Reception at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, located one mile from the Marcus Center at 325 W. Walnut Street. Patrons can mix and mingle with the cast and crew of ELLA ENCHANTED while enjoying refreshments, courtesy of First Stage.

Saturday, April 16 at 2:00 p.m.: Boswell Book Company – Gail Carson Levine, author of Ella Enchanted and other titles will be at Boswell Book Company located at 2559 N. Downer Avenue, Milwaukee.

Saturday, April 16: Extended talkback – Author Gail Carson Levine will participate in an extended talkback/Q&A session with the audience following the 3:30 p.m. performance of ELLA ENCHANTED at the Marcus Center’s Todd Wehr Theater, located at 929 N. Water Street, Milwaukee.

Sunday, April 17 at 11:00 a.m.: Author’s Brunch – Join us for brunch at the InterContinental Hotel, located at 139 E. Kilbourn Avenue, Milwaukee featuring a talk by **Gail Carson Levine**, author of Ella Enchanted. Event includes brunch, tickets to the 1:00 p.m. performance of First Stage’s world premiere musical ELLA ENCHANTED and a signed copy of the book. More information is available at www.FirstStage.org.

FACT SHEET

About: ELLA ENCHANTED

Location: The Marcus Center's Todd Wehr Theater, 929 N. Water Street, Milwaukee

Dates: April 1 – May 1, 2016

Description: At birth, Ella of Frell was given the “gift” of obedience by a misguided fairy. She must obey any order given to her, whether it's hopping on one foot for a day or chopping off her own head! Unwilling to accept her fate, strong-willed Ella embarks on a quest to reverse this curse, encountering ogres, giants, wicked stepsisters, fairy godmothers, and a handsome prince along the way. Your family will experience a fairy tale like no other in this world premiere musical adventure. *For everyone ages 6 and up.*

Performances:

- Friday, April 1 at 7:00 p.m. – **Opening Night**
- Saturday, April 2 at 1:00, 3:30 & 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, April 3 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, April 6 at 7:00 p.m. – **Pay What You Choose performance**
- Saturday, April 9 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, April 10 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, April 16 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, April 17 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, April 23 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, April 24 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, April 30 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, May 1 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.

Ticket and information: Tickets start at \$15. Call (414) 273-7206 or online at www.firststage.org

ASL Interpreted Performance: Sunday, May 1 at 3:30 p.m. – this performance will be sign language interpreted for patrons who are deaf or have low hearing. Assistive listening devices are also available at the Todd Wehr Theater.

About First Stage

Since 1987, 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. In 2012, First Stage was selected to participate in the Partners in Education program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. First Stage is a member of TYA/USA, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education, Theatre Wisconsin, and Milwaukee Arts Partners, and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF).