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## **First Stage presents world premiere LUCHADORA! A vibrant exploration of Mexican American tradition**

April 10 – 26, 2015

Todd Wehr Theater, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts

by Alvaro Saar Rios

**Directed by Jeff Frank**

*This play is for everyone ages 7 and up.*

**Milwaukee, WI** – First Stage’s 2014-2015 season continues with LUCHADORA! April 10 – 26, 2015, the next play in the Wisconsin Cycle, First Stage’s new play development initiative honoring the local history and heritage of Wisconsin. Performances take place 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](http://www.firststage.org).

Inspired by the Chinese legend of Mulan, Milwaukee-based playwright Alvaro Saar Rios spins the tale through the prism of Mexican culture and one family’s journey to Wisconsin. LUCHADORA! explores questions of identity, honor, the meaning of family and the world of wrestling. "Audiences at our workshops of the early script loved what they heard, and Alvaro took their feedback and has fashioned a play unlike anything we've ever done before," said First Stage Artistic Director Jeff Frank. "We've certainly never had a wrestling match on our stage before! It's a journey of discovery told boldly and with humor that honors the German immigrants of both Texas and Milwaukee, celebrates the rich culture of Mexico, and the secret world of the Lucha Libre wrestling tradition."

The discovery of a pink wrestling mask in her Nana Lupita’s briefcase sends an inquisitive Vanessa on an uncharted exploration into her Mexican American heritage, revealing family

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***First Stage presents LUCHADORA!/add one***

secrets that change her forever. Starting in 1950s small town Texas to present day Milwaukee, LUCHADORA! unmask the significance of family traditions and the cultural identity that is shared by generations.

Scenic Designer Sarah Hunt-Frank and Director Jeff Frank worked with approximately 120 Bruce Guadalupe Middle School students and their teachers, including art teacher Jacobo Lovo to create close to 500 original pieces of papel picado, a decorative Mexican folk-art crafted from tissue paper, inspired by the themes in LUCHADORA! including family, identity, masks and honor. Student art was incorporated into the set design and can be seen on stage and in the lobby throughout the run of the play. First Stage also collaborated with the organization's Latino Arts Strings Program to perform prior to the 1:00 p.m. performance on Saturday, April 18.

**Alvaro Saar Rios (Playwright)** is a writer and performer. He holds an M.F.A. in Writing for the Stage & Screen from Northwestern University and is the co-founder of the national touring performance troupe The Royal Mexican Players. His work has been performed in New York City, Hawaii, Milwaukee, and all over Texas! He teaches playwriting at UW-Milwaukee and has play commissions from The Alley Theatre (TX), Milwaukee Zoological Society and First Stage.

**Jeff Frank (Director)** has been First Stage's artistic director since February 2003. Previously he had served as education director/associate artistic director. Jeff is a native Wisconsinite who earned a B.F.A. in theater from UW-Whitewater and went on to the University of Utah, earning an M.F.A. in child drama. Over the past 17 seasons Jeff has directed over 50 First Stage productions. Among his favorites are: BIG, THE MUSICAL; CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY; PETER PAN AND WENDY; U: BUG: ME; THE NEVERENDING STORY; SLEEPING BEAUTY; TOM SAWYER; SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON; LILLY'S PURPLE PLASTIC PURSE; A LITTLE HOUSE CHRISTMAS; THE HOBBIT; A MIDNIGHT CRY; PERSEUS BAYOU; A CHRISTMAS STORY and THE GIVER.

The adult actor cast of LUCHADORA! includes **Lucinda Johnston** (Member of Actor's Equity Association) as Nana Lupita; **Dan Katula** (Member of Actor's Equity Association) as El Hijo; **Michelle Lopez-Rios** (Member of Actor's Equity Association) as Mask Maker; **David Flores** as Father; **Sherrick Robinson** as Wrestler/Referee and **Karl Iglesias** as Understudy Father/El Hijo.

Young performer roles are double cast. Young performers in the Sandia Cast are **Bree Kazinski** (as Lupita) from Dousman; **Lizzie Borg** (as Vanessa), **Elizabeth Porter** (as Hannah), **David Garcia**

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## **First Stage presents LUCHADORA!/add two**

**Saurez** (Ensemble) and **Rowan Chheda** (Ensemble) from Milwaukee; **Claire Zempel** (as Liesel) from Wauwatosa; **Gavin Rangel** (as Leopold) from Germantown; **Jacob Hauswirth** (Ensemble) from Franklin and **Jackson Hake** (Ensemble) from Menomonee Falls.

Young performers in the Manzana Cast are **Jamie Mercado** (as Lupita) from Oak Creek; **Gaby Musickant** (as Vanessa) from Mequon; **Mackenzie Swart** (as Hannah) from Brookfield; **Miranda Cccsarini** (as Liesel), **Preston Carr** (as Leopold), **Sam Nunez** (Ensemble), and **Lawson Mitchell** (Ensemble) from Milwaukee; **Nikolai Morrow** (Ensemble) from Delafield and **Tyler Johnson** (Ensemble) from Waukesha.

The Artistic Staff for LUCHADORA! includes: **Sarah Hunt-Frank** (Scenic Designer); **Alex Tecoma** (Costume Designer) **Noelle Stollmack** (Lighting Designer); **Lucas Clopton** (Sound Designer); **Chris Multerer** (Wrestling Choreographer); **Jim Fletcher** (Assistant Fight Choreographer); **Tom Reed** (Boxing Coach); **Amy Gilbert** (Stage Manager) and **Ryan Treviranus** (Assistant Stage Manager).

Tickets for LUCHADORA! start at \$14.50. Tickets may be purchased at [www.firststage.org](http://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.

### **Special events for LUCHADORA!**

#### **Opening Night Reception**

**Friday, April 10**

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 LUCHADORA! while enjoying refreshments, courtesy of First Stage.

**First Stage presents LUCHADORA!//add three**

## **FACT SHEET**

**About:** LUCHADORA! is a world premiere play by Alvaro Saar Rios

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

**Dates:** April 10 – 26, 2015

**Description:** The discovery of a pink wrestling mask in her Nana Lupita's briefcase sends an inquisitive Vanessa on an uncharted exploration into her Mexican American heritage, revealing family secrets that change her forever. Starting in 1950s small town Texas to present day Milwaukee, LUCHADORA! unmask the significance of family traditions and the cultural identity that is shared by generations. *For everyone ages 7 and up.*

### **Performances:**

- Friday, April 10 at 7:00 p.m. – OPENING NIGHT
- Saturday, April 11 at 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, April 12 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, April 18 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, April 19 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, April 25 at 3:30 & 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, April 26 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.

**Ticket prices:** Start at \$14.50.

**Tickets and information:** Call (414) 273-7206 or online at [www.firststage.org](http://www.firststage.org)

### **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).

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