

MILWAUKEE • WAUKESHA • MEQUON



SAVE BIG
WHEN YOU
SIGN UP
EARLY!

FIRST STAGE

THEATER ACADEMY

FALL 2026



firststage.org

(414) 267-2970



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Dear Families,

At First Stage, we believe theater is more than a performance – it’s a powerful way for young people to grow. It’s a transformative journey that equips you with life skills, where creativity becomes your compass, empathy your script, and resilience your standing ovation.

For 34 years, the classes within the First Stage Theater Academy have met students where they are and offered an experience unlike any other. Our philosophy, **life skills through stage skills**, is at the heart of every class. Our teaching artists create a safe and supportive environment where students are encouraged to stretch their imaginations, express themselves, and grow their confidence.

We live by our First Stage cheer, created by and for First Stage students: “I can’t is not in my vocabulary. I take risks. I conquer my fears. I am not afraid to lead.” These words guide everything we do, reminding us that bravery, curiosity, and leadership are at the core of who we are and how we grow.

As we celebrate First Stage’s 40th Anniversary, we hope you can join us throughout the school year for classes that will ignite minds, spark creativity, and inspire a lifelong love of storytelling. We look forward to seeing you!



J.T. BACKES
 Academy Director
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HANNAH ESCH
 K-4 & Next Steps Manager
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TUITION

Early Bird Pricing

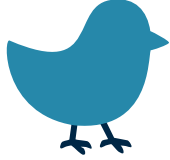
\$25 off through July 13

Regular Bird Pricing

July 14 – August 24

Late Bird Pricing

\$25 increase after August 24



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LOCATIONS

Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

The Milwaukee Youth Arts Center (MYAC) is a nationally recognized state-of-the-art educational facility, located at 325 W Walnut Street, Milwaukee, WI 53212 in historic Schlitz Park.

Concordia University Wisconsin

Located just 20 minutes north of Milwaukee at 12800 N Lake Shore Drive, Mequon, WI 53097, Concordia University Wisconsin offers an inspiring setting for learning in a vibrant academic environment.

Carroll University

Located in the heart of Waukesha at 100 N East Avenue, Waukesha, WI 53186, Carroll University offers a welcoming campus that blends historic charm with modern academic facilities.



ACCESS FOR ALL

At First Stage, we believe in the transformative power of theater to enlighten, educate, and entertain. We're dedicated to making our performances, theater training programs, and in-school education accessible and welcoming for everyone in our community.

For financial support, consider applying to our Access for All program where you can enjoy 70% off tickets to our productions and financial scholarships covering a portion of tuition to our Theater Academy classes. We determine eligibility through a blend of financial assessment, personal needs assessment, and your unique story.

We want to hear from you! To apply, visit firststage.org/access.

PRESENTATIONS

Every Academy session will culminate in a lively presentation of class work for family and friends. Presentations will be held on the final day of class. Details will be noted in the welcome letter you will receive prior to the start of class.

Photos by Paul Ruffolo



Jeff Frank, Executive Artistic Director



First Stage is dedicated to the educational and personal development of our community's youth. For 40 years, we have been creating extraordinary theater experiences for young people and their families through our professional Theater Productions, Theater Academy training, and Theater in Education programming.

THEATER PRODUCTIONS

With more than 70,000 young people and families attending our productions annually and as the second-largest theater company in Milwaukee, First Stage ensures that nothing stands in the way of a youth being inspired, enlightened, and entertained by our theater productions.

THEATER ACADEMY

Taught by professional teaching artists, the Academy serves nearly 2,000 students annually, nurtures life skills through stage skills by providing students with a foundation in theater. We strive to build the next generation of creative, empathetic, and confident leaders and artists.

THEATER IN EDUCATION

First Stage serves 10,000 students annually in schools and community-based programs that utilize arts-integrated and interactive methods to enhance students' literacy development, language comprehension, and social/emotional learning.

YOU & ME

AGES 3-5 + ADULT



TOGETHER WITH GO, DOG. GO!

Explore the colorful world of *Go, Dog. Go!* and other stories by P.D. Eastman, together! Create special shared moments in this class designed for young people and their favorite grown-up.

Oct 10 - Nov 14 | Sat, 9:15-9:45 AM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Note: An adult, Parent, or Guardian must accompany student to all You & Me classes.



EARLY BIRD | \$200 through July 13
REGULAR BIRD | \$225 July 14 - August 24
LATE BIRD | \$250 after August 24



STORY DRAMA

GRADES K4-1



PLAYMAKERS

GRADES 1-2



GO, DOG. GO! & MORE JOYFUL CLASSICS

Use your voice, body, and imagination to bring the playful worlds of P.D. Eastman's stories to life! Create energetic characters and explore storytelling through movement and expression.

Oct 10 - Nov 14 | Sat, 9:00-9:45 AM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Oct 17 - Nov 21 | Sat, 9:00-9:45 AM
Concordia University Wisconsin

Oct 17 - Nov 21 | Sat, 9:30-10:15 AM
Carroll University



EARLY BIRD | \$225 through July 13
REGULAR BIRD | \$250 July 14 - August 24
LATE BIRD | \$275 after August 24

SEUSS ON THE LOOSE

Oh the places we'll go in the whimsical world of Dr. Seuss! Imagination runs wild with silly rhymes, colorful characters, and wacky worlds inspired by classic tales.

Oct 10 - Nov 14 | Sat, 9:00-10:00 AM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Oct 10 - Nov 14 | Sat, 10:30-11:30 AM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Oct 17 - Nov 21 | Sat, 9:30-10:30 AM
Concordia University Wisconsin

Oct 17 - Nov 21 | Sat, 10:45-11:45 AM
Carroll University



EARLY BIRD | \$225 through July 13
REGULAR BIRD | \$250 July 14 - August 24
LATE BIRD | \$275 after August 24

GRADES 3-4



GRADES 3-4



SCENE STUDY: SHADOWS & SUSPENSE

Step into the shadows and bring suspenseful stories to life! Explore how movement and voice can create dramatic tension, crafting haunting scenes while growing as confident performers.

Oct 8 - Nov 12 | Thu, 4:30-5:30 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Oct 10 - Nov 14 | Sat, 10:00-11:00 AM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Oct 17 - Nov 21 | Sat, 10:00-11:00 AM
Concordia University Wisconsin

Oct 17 - Nov 21 | Sat, 9:30-10:30 AM
Carroll University



EARLY BIRD | \$250 through July 13
REGULAR BIRD | \$275 July 14 - August 24
LATE BIRD | \$300 after August 24

MUSICAL THEATER: MUSICAL VILLAINS

Embrace your inner villain! Explore dark and dramatic villain characters through powerful songs and bold movements, learning to command the stage with style, power, and a touch of wickedness.

Oct 8 - Nov 12 | Thu, 4:30-5:30 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

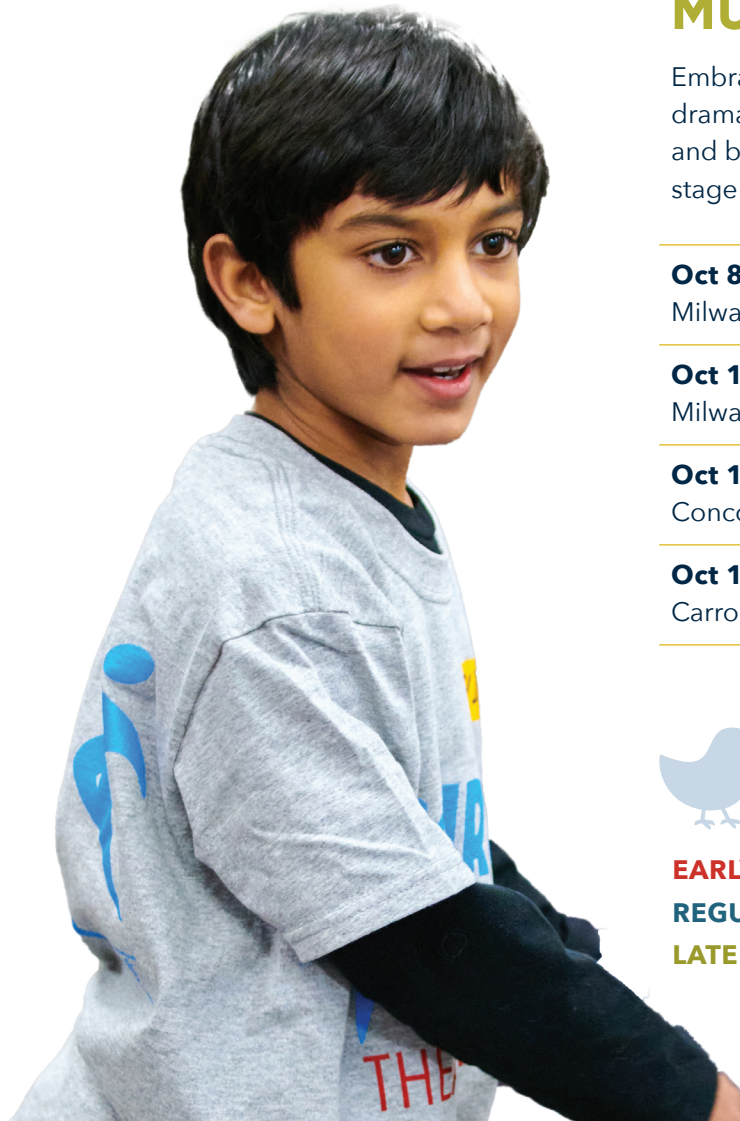
Oct 10 - Nov 14 | Sat, 11:30 AM-12:30 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Oct 17 - Nov 21 | Sat, 11:00 AM-12:00 PM
Concordia University Wisconsin

Oct 17 - Nov 21 | Sat, 11:00 AM-12:00 PM
Carroll University



EARLY BIRD | \$250 through July 13
REGULAR BIRD | \$275 July 14 - August 24
LATE BIRD | \$300 after August 24



READY FOR MORE?



SCHOOL YEAR INTENSIVES

Extended contact hours and progressive curriculum in these multi-session classes empower you to maximize your artistic skills as well as emphasize commitment, responsibility, critical thinking, and personal expression.

School Year Intensives run September 2026 - May 2027.

YOUNG COMPANY AUDITIONS

August 6-8 & August 13-15, 2026
Virtual Submissions due August 15

SCHOOL YEAR INTENSIVE AUDITIONS

August 17-21, 2026
Virtual Submissions due August 21

Contact the Academy Office at (414) 267-2970 for more information.



GRADES 8-12 YOUNG COMPANY

Train at a pre-professional level in the Academy's award winning program for dedicated young artists. Immerse yourself in rigorous college- and graduate-level instruction in Acting, Voice, Movement, and Shakespeare, along with electives such as Stage Combat, Dialects, and Audition Technique—all within a supportive, ensemble-focused environment.

GRADES 5-9 YOUNG ACTORS STUDIO

Modeled after our award-winning Young Company program, Young Actors Studio provides a high-caliber, holistic training experience for younger performers. Receive focused training in acting, dance, and voice, and build versatile performance skills while deepening your artistic growth.

GRADES 6-12 ORGANIZED CHAOS

Organized Chaos challenges you to dive deeper into long-form improvisation, building bold characters, stronger stories, and confident, in-the-moment choices—no script required.

GRADES 7-12 PRODUCTION DESIGN

Explore all of the elements that bring a production to life—set, lightning, props, sound, and more! Dive in and gain hands-on knowledge of what goes into being a professional designer.

GRADES 9-12 ADVANCED MUSICAL THEATER

Advance your skills in singing, dancing, and acting while building essential tools for musical theater. Explore audition techniques, the business of being a performer, and more.

NEXT STEPS

GRADES 3-12



Step into a supportive, judgment-free space designed for neurodivergent students to grow as artists and individuals.

Guided by the philosophy of teaching life skills through stage skills, each class centers the joy of theater arts while building confidence, creativity, and connection.

Oct 10 - Nov 14 | Sat, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

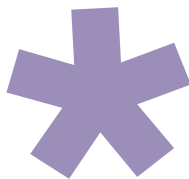
Special registration form required – to register, contact nextsteps@firststage.org or call (414) 267-2941.

If you receive support from the CLTS Waiver program, talk to your case manager to see if they will assist in covering the tuition cost.



TUITION | \$325

early bird discount does not apply



NEXT STEPS

GRADES 3-12



Class Sizes: Our classroom model includes teams of lead teachers, special education professionals, and teaching assistants with approximately a 2:1 student to teacher ratio. Family aides may accompany a student to class as necessary and agreed upon between the family and First Stage.

Curriculum: Students explore character, relationships, action, and text in a safe, welcoming environment that encourages expression without fear of failure, supporting meaningful next steps on stage and beyond.



GRADES 5-8



GRADES 5-8



ACTING: HAUNTED ADVENTURES

Enter if you dare... Explore acting techniques through mood, tension, and storytelling, using material inspired by First Stage's past productions.

Oct 8 - Nov 12 | Thu, 4:30-5:30 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Oct 10 - Nov 14 | Sat, 11:30 AM-12:30 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

IMPROVISATION

Develop expressiveness, spontaneity, and train your brain to think quickly and with reason through improvisational character and scene work.

Oct 10 - Nov 14 | Sat, 11:15 AM-12:15 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

MUSICAL THEATER: WHIMSY & WONDER

Step into a world of whimsy and wonder! Explore imaginative, larger-than-life worlds and build skills in character and storytelling through song, movement, and scene work.

Oct 8 - Nov 12 | Thu, 4:30-5:30 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Oct 10 - Nov 14 | Sat, 10:00-11:00 AM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Oct 17 - Nov 21 | Sat, 11:15 AM-12:15 PM
Concordia University Wisconsin



EARLY BIRD | \$250 through July 13
REGULAR BIRD | \$275 July 14 - August 24
LATE BIRD | \$300 after August 24

GRADES 5-12



STAGE COMBAT: UNARMED

Stage combat is the art of creating stunts, falls, and fights—safely! Explore unarmed stage combat through physical comedy and fight techniques to tell bold, comedic stories.

Oct 10 - Nov 14 | Sat, 1:15-2:15 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

AUDITION PREP

Want to nail your auditions with confidence? Learn how to show up prepared, make bold choices, and adapt in the moment.

Oct 10 - Nov 14 | Sat, 12:00-1:00 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center



EARLY BIRD | \$250 through July 13
REGULAR BIRD | \$275 July 14 - August 24
LATE BIRD | \$300 after August 24

FAQ

How do I register for First Stage Theater Academy?

All registrations are first-come, first-served, by mail, phone, or on our website. Register early for best availability. Please complete all information on your registration form to ensure your registration is processed as soon as possible.

Will I receive a confirmation of my registration?

Registration confirmations are sent via email – please read it thoroughly. This email will also list any remaining balance, which is due one week prior to the first day of the session.

Is there a waitlist for classes that are full?

Waitlists are available for classes that have reached the enrollment limit. Students on waitlists will be notified by phone if space opens. While we cannot guarantee if or when space will open, we encourage you to join our first-come, first-served waitlists.

What does my tuition include, and when is my tuition due?

Tuition includes all materials, plus one Academy t-shirt per student. A \$75 minimum deposit is required at the time of registration. Payment plans may be set up through the Academy Office. Missed payments may result in removal from class. Payment methods may be updated, or balances paid in full by cash or check, at any time. All balances must be paid in full before your student's class begins.

Do you offer refunds?

Refunds are available until the Friday before your student's class begins, minus a \$25 administrative fee. No refunds or tuition credits are given after the first day of class. Any deposit or tuition paid will be forfeited once the session begins.

What if my child needs to miss a class?

Due to the nature of the program, make-up classes are not available, and refunds or credits will not be given for missed classes. Please keep students home if they are sick or contagious, and notify the Academy office at attendance@firststage.org of any planned absences. If a student becomes ill during the day, a parent/guardian will be contacted and expected to pick them up promptly. First Stage Theater Academy reserves the right to send students home for inappropriate or disrespectful behavior.

Can my child switch a class?

Families needing to switch course selections due to a scheduling conflict or emergency should contact the Academy office. Class changes are based on availability, and students may not switch groups after the first day of class.

First Stage Theater Academy Office

(414) 267-2970 | academy@firststage.org



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Milwaukee, WI 53212



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