



**Media Contact:**

Vanessa Reza

[VReza@boelterlincoln.com](mailto:VReza@boelterlincoln.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **SOAR TO NEVERLAND THROUGH DYNAMIC STAGECRAFT IN MAGICAL *PETER PAN & WENDY***

Milwaukee favorites Todd Denning and David Flores headline signature First Stage reimaging

**MILWAUKEE, Wis (January 14, 2026)** - A magical, movement-driven reimaging of the beloved classic, First Stage's *Peter Pan and Wendy* transports families to Neverland filled with imagination, courage, and theatrical magic. Running February 20 – March 22 at the Marcus Performing Arts Center's Todd Wehr Theater, this show is perfect for "big kid" audiences 6 and up.

*Peter Pan & Wendy* transforms J.M. Barrie's timeless tale into a thrilling adventure that captures both the wonder of childhood and the emotional pull of growing up—combining stage magic and physical storytelling to deliver a bold, immersive theatrical experience filled with sword fights, flying, and a giant crocodile puppet.

"*Peter Pan and Wendy* shows First Stage at our very best," shared Director Jeff Frank, who is joined by Assistant Director Samantha Montgomery and Fight Director Todd Denning. "The journey begins with a black void bursting into life as characters spill onto the stage manipulating scenic elements, puppets, and even the actors themselves to create the magic and wonder of Neverland."

All performances will feature interactive, hands-on lobby activities starting 30 minutes before showtime. Led by First Stage teaching artists, these family-friendly experiences will include literacy adventures, STEM challenges, and sensory play—all designed to spark creativity and connection.

The production features Todd Denning\* as Mr. Darling and Captain Hook, alongside Tori Watson\* as Mrs. Darling, J.T. Backes\* as Starkey, David Flores as Smee, Sherrick Robinson\* as Cecco, and Tim Linn as Mullins. They are joined by 46 young performers in two alternating 23-person casts, continuing First Stage's tradition of youth-focused theater. Young performers take the lead with Marko Van Slyke and Simon Phillips as Peter Pan, and Niamh Mayne and Evie Maassen as Wendy Darling. [Full cast and creative team listed here.](#)

**Recommended for families with young people ages 6-14 and magical dreamers of all ages.** The show runs approximately 75 minutes plus a brief intermission. [Tickets can be purchased here](#) and prices range from \$24 to \$45 for most shows. The [Pay What You Choose Performance](#) is Friday,

February 27 at 7:00 p.m., the [Sensory Friendly Performance](#) is Saturday, March 7 at 3:30 p.m., and the [Sign Language Interpreted Performance](#) is Sunday, March 22 at 1:00 p.m.

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#### **About First Stage**

Founded in 1987, First Stage is one of the nation's leading theaters for young people and families, and a driving force behind the creation of the best and most innovative plays for family audiences, theater training programs for young people, and education initiatives for its schools and community. First Stage ensures that all programming is not only accessible to its community but that it is reflective of the community it serves.

First Stage creates theater that honors young people's perspectives and sparks meaningful conversation. The company has produced more than 70 world premiere plays addressing issues relevant to today's youth. Its nationally recognized Theater Academy—one of the largest of its kind—serves students ages 3–18, building life skills through stage skills, including the Next Steps Program for neurodivergent students. As Wisconsin's leader in arts-integrated education, First Stage's Theater in Education Programs reach more than 10,000 students each year by blending theater with classroom learning.

First Stage is a member of TYA/USA, Milwaukee Theater District, Milwaukee Arts Partners, and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF). For more information, visit [firststage.org](http://firststage.org)

#### **About Jeff Frank**

Recognized as one of the top directors in the field with an expertise in developing new work, Jeff holds a BFA in Theater from the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater and an MFA in Child Drama from the University of Utah. Jeff served as First Stage's Education and Academy Director from 1996-2003, followed by a long tenure as Artistic Director before becoming Executive Artistic Director in March of 2024. As Jeff enters his 30th season, he remains committed to the power of theater to transform lives and is forever thankful to call First Stage home.

#### **About Samantha Montgomery**

Samantha is an Actor, Director, & Educator. Some of her directing credits at First Stage include *A Snowy Day*, *Dancing Granny*, *Three Little Birds*, and *The Dinosaur Play*. Samantha is the Director of Artistic Inclusion and Community Engagement at First Stage and a member of the Actors' Equity Association.

#### **About Todd Denning\***

Since 1998, Todd has worked with First Stage as an actor, director, teacher, fight director, stage manager and dialect coach. As an actor, he was just seen in *A Christmas Carol* at Milwaukee Rep and he has appeared in over 30 First Stage productions—most recently, *Pete The Cat*. As a fight director, Todd recently staged the violence for *Murder Girl* at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre; and he was the Assistant Fight Director for Alabama Shakespeare Festival's productions of *Sherwood* and *Hamlet*.

#### **About David Flores**

David Flores has performed in theater, music, and dance in Milwaukee and beyond, including Bombshell, Boulevard, First Stage, Forward Theater, In Tandem, Milwaukee Chamber, Milwaukee Shakespeare, Off The Wall, Optimist, Next Act, Renaissance, Skylight, Theater X, Theatre Gigante, Third Avenue Playworks, Windfall, Florentine Opera, Milwaukee Opera Theatre, and Wild Space Dance. Previous First Stage credits: *Luchadora!* (Father); *Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer™: The Musical* (Santa); *Escape From Peligro Island* (Ensemble); *Esperanza Rising* (Papa/Alfonso); stage director for two productions in First Stage's Amplify Series.

#### **PETER PAN AND WENDY**

Adapted by Doug Rand

TYA Version Adapted by Jeff Frank and First Stage

Produced by special arrangement with Playscripts, Inc.

\* Appearing through an Agreement between First Stage and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States