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FIRST STAGE LAUNCHES YOUNG ACTORS STUDIO

The program is an expansion of the Theater Academy, now open for fall enrollment

MILWAUKEE, Wis. (August 12, 2025)—Enrollment is open for First Stage’s 2025-2026 Theater Academy, one of the nation’s largest high-impact theater training programs for young people, and this fall brings exciting new offerings for young performers. Among them is the **Young Actors Studio**—a comprehensive, audition-based program for performers in grades 5-9. The program is designed for passionate young performers seeking advanced instruction in acting, dance, and voice.

Young Actors Studio is modeled after First Stage’s award-winning **Young Company** for advanced high school students and is part of First Stage’s continued effort to nurture young talent. Young Actors Studio auditions will be held Aug. 18-22 from 2:30-4:30 p.m. at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center’s Goodman Mainstage Hall.

Also new this year is **You & Me**, a guardian and child (ages 3-5) class that facilitates shared unique experiences through creative drama and imagination. And, for young people who are neurodivergent, First Stage offers **Next Steps**, highly specialized small classes that explore singing, dancing, and improvisation.

“Theater training is more than learning to perform on stage,” says J.T. Backes, Academy Director, Milwaukee theater artist, and Academy alum, “it’s a transformative journey that helps students build life skills, empowering them to take risks, conquer fears and grow in confidence, all within a supportive environment.”

First Stage Theater Academy begins its school year classes Sept. 20. Classes occur at three venues: Milwaukee Youth Arts Center in Milwaukee, Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts in Brookfield, and Concordia University Wisconsin in Mequon.

Classes, taught by professional theater teaching artists, are available for all experience levels, ranging from musical theater and acting to puppetry. Auditions and advanced sign-up are required for Young Actors Studio and other advanced classes. Those interested can contact the Academy Office at (414) 267-2970 for more information. All school year classes can be found at

www.firststage.org/School-Year-Academy.

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 produces plays that honor the young person's point of view, include diverse and traditionally underrepresented voices, and inspire meaningful conversations. First Stage has presented more than 70 world premiere productions that address important subject matters relevant to today's youth. The Theater Academy is one of the nation's largest high-impact theater training programs for young people (3-18 years old). Through a challenging curriculum taught by professional teaching artists, the Academy nurtures life skills through stage skills and includes the Next Steps Program that tailors Theater Academy classes to the needs of young people on the autism spectrum and with other developmental disabilities. As Wisconsin's leader in arts-integrated education in schools, First Stage's dynamic Theater in Education Programs cleverly blend theater activities with standard curriculum—allowing more than 10,000 students annually to learn traditional academic subjects through creativity and self-expression.

First Stage is a member of TYA/USA, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education, Milwaukee Arts Partners and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF). For more information, visit firststage.org.

Access For All: First Stage makes its programming more accessible to the entire community through Access For All, a program wherein qualifying families and individuals can enjoy up to 85% scholarships for our Theater Academy. To apply or find more information please visit: [First Stage | Access for All](#)