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FIRST STAGE HATCHES MO WILLEMS' BRAND-NEW HOLIDAY MUSICAL, *THE PIGEON GETS A BIG TIME HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA!*

Milwaukee audiences will be among the first in the nation to experience the musical from the #1 New York Times best-selling children's book author/illustrator

MILWAUKEE, Wis. (October 13, 2025) — Just in time for the holidays, First Stage and [Hidden Pigeon Company](#) (HPC) present [*The Pigeon Gets a Big Time Holiday Extravaganza*](#), a new stage show based on beloved characters from #1 New York Times bestselling children's book author and illustrator Mo Willems. Performances run November 21–December 28, 2025, at the Marcus Center's Todd Wehr Theater.

When Willems' characters get together for the holidays, it's bound to be the biggest extravaganza ever! The Unlimited Squirrels deck the halls and Elephant and Piggie come ready to celebrate. But will The Pigeon join in the festivities, or will he run all the way to the North Pole in search of the greatest gift ever? Catchy tunes, silly stories, goofy gifts, audience antics: they're all part of this brand-new musical party that sleighs.

Director Michelle LoRicco shared, "The holidays can bring so much pressure: finding the perfect present, waiting for school break, or trying to make everything just right. At its heart, this story reminds us that the greatest gift we can give is our time, attention, and presence with the people we love."

First Stage is one of seven theaters across the country premiering this Willems musical, following a series of developmental workshops lead by First Stage last season. Audiences—including those in Milwaukee—were given an exclusive sneak peek and the opportunity to provide feedback that helped shape the final production.

Following First Stage's workshop, Mo Willems shared, "Wow! It was a great experience. It was so filled with fun, joy, and excitement. How lucky are we to have a group like First Stage making theater for the most important audience—kids!"

All opening weekend performances will feature interactive, hands-on lobby activities starting one hour 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.

Directed by **Michelle LoRizzo**, the production features adult performers **Kailey Azure Green*** as The Pigeon, **James Carrington*** as Elephant Gerald, and **Rachael Zientek** as Piggie. They will be joined by **18 young performers** in two alternating 9-person casts, continuing First Stage's tradition of youth-focused theater. [Full cast and creative team listed here.](#)

Dates: November 21 – December 28, 2025

Venue: Todd Wehr Theater at the Marcus Performing Arts Center

Run Time: Approx. 75 minutes (including a brief intermission)

Age Recommendation: 4+

Tickets: \$24-\$45

Pay What You Choose Performance: Friday, December 5 at 7:00 p.m.

Sensory Friendly Performance: Saturday, December 6 at 3:30 p.m.

Tickets: www.firststage.org

Willems is the acclaimed author and illustrator of a new generation of children's classics, well loved by young families around the world. Some of Willems' fan-favorite titles include *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*, the beloved *Elephant and Piggie*, and *Unlimited Squirrels*.

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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 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.

About Hidden Pigeon Company

Hidden Pigeon Company (HPC) is an exciting multiplatform kids and family content company founded in early 2023 by celebrated children's book author Mo Willems along with Stampede Ventures and RedBird Capital Partners. It was formed with the goal of expanding the already-impressive reach and impact of Willems' bestselling catalog of children's books and intellectual property across all entertainment platforms—from television, film, and digital to live events, location-based experiences, licensing & merchandising, publishing, and more. Hidden Pigeon Company takes its name from Willems' immensely popular character, The Pigeon, from *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* and *Don't Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late!*, as kids and "former kids" (as Mo likes to say)—delight in finding The Pigeon hidden somewhere in all his books. HPC's Hidden Pigeon Channel on YouTube features fresh content based on Willems' characters and brands, including The Pigeon, Elephant and Piggie, and Knuffle Bunny, to inspire creativity and spark serious silliness.

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

THE PIGEON GETS A BIG TIME HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA!

Based on Books & Characters by Mo Willems, Script and Lyrics by Mo Willems & Adam Tobin, Music by Deborah Wicks La Puma, and Dramaturgy by Megan Alritz

Produced by special arrangement with Hidden Pigeon, LLC.

Originally commissioned and developed by Children's Theater of Madison, Dallas Children's Theatre, First Stage, Main Street Theater, Seattle Children's Theatre, The Coterie, and The Rose.

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