

WINTER 2026

SAVE BIG
WHEN YOU
SIGN UP
EARLY!



FIRST STAGE THEATER ACADEMY



firststage.org

(414) 267-2970

MILWAUKEE • WAUKESHA • MEQUON



Locations	4
Ages 3-5 + Adult. . .	7
Grades K4-1	8
Grades 1-2.	9
Grades 3-4	10
Grades 5-8	12
Grades 5-12	14
Next Steps.	16
FAQ.	18



Dear Families,

As we celebrate our 40th Anniversary Season, you'll notice our winter classes are inspired by the legacy we have made thus far—literary classics, timeless tales, and enchanting adventures. Themes that we hope will continue to inspire generations to come.

At First Stage, we believe that theater is more than a performance—it's a powerful way for young people to grow. It's a transformative journey of self-discovery that equips students with life skills to tell their own stories with confidence, creativity, and joy. For more than 30 years, the classes within the First Stage Theater Academy meet students where they are and offer an experience unlike any other.

Our philosophy is teaching life skills through stage skills throughout all our course offerings. Our Professional Teaching Artists create a safe, positive learning environment that allows students to **take risks and conquer fears** all while being fully supported.

We believe that theater training for young people is where the imagination takes the spotlight, has the power to ignite minds, touch hearts, and change the world.

We hope you can join us throughout the school year! We look forward to seeing you!



J.T. BACKES

Academy Director
jtbackes@firststage.org



HANNAH ESCH

K-4 & Next Steps Manager
hesch@firststage.org



SAVE BIG
WHEN YOU
SIGN UP
EARLY!

TUITION

Early Bird Pricing

\$25 off through October 27

Regular Bird Pricing

October 28 - December 1

Late Bird Pricing

\$25 increase after December 1

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



CHRISTOPHER ROBIN & FRIENDS

Explore the huggable world of Winnie-the-Pooh and other stories from the Hundred Acre Wood, together! Create special shared moments in this class designed for young people and their favorite grown-up.

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | 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 Oct 27*

REGULAR BIRD | \$225 *Oct 28 - Dec 1*

LATE BIRD | \$250 *after Dec 1*



STORY DRAMA

GRADES K4-1



PLAYMAKERS

GRADES 1-2

ADVENTURES IN THE HUNDRED ACRE WOOD

Join Pooh, Piglet, Tigger, and friends and explore the Hundred Acre Wood! Use your voice, body, and imagination to embark on exciting adventures and discover the values of friendship, kindness, courage, and teamwork.

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 9:00-9:45 AM

Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 9:30-10:15 AM

Concordia University Wisconsin

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 9:30-10:15 AM

Carroll University



HEFFALUMPS & WOZLES

There are Heffalumps and Wozles in the Hundred Acre Wood! Use your voice, body, and imagination to help Pooh and his friends as you set out on a whimsical adventure filled with mischief and mystery.

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 9:00-10:00 AM

Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 10:30-11:30 AM

Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 10:45-11:45 AM

Concordia University Wisconsin

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 10:45-11:45 AM

Carroll University



EARLY BIRD | \$225 through Oct 27

REGULAR BIRD | \$250 Oct 28 - Dec 1

LATE BIRD | \$275 after Dec 1



EARLY BIRD | \$225 through Oct 27

REGULAR BIRD | \$250 Oct 28 - Dec 1

LATE BIRD | \$275 after Dec 1

GRADES 3-4



GRADES 3-4

SCENE STUDY: LITERARY CLASSICS

Explore timeless literary classics that have inspired generations of readers. Bring memorable characters and scenes to life while deepening your appreciation for great storytelling.

Jan 21 - Feb 25 | Thu, 4:30-5:30 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 10:00-11:00 AM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 9:30-10:30 AM
Concordia University Wisconsin

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 9:30-10:30 AM
Carroll University



MUSICAL THEATER: ENCHANTING ADVENTURES

Bring colorful characters and exciting stories to life through singing, dancing, and acting—inspired by First Stage favorites like *Ella Enchanted*, *Willy Wonka and The Chocolate Factory*, and *Shrek*.

Jan 21 - Feb 25 | Thu, 4:30-5:30 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 11:30 AM-12:30 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 11:00 AM-12:00 PM
Concordia University Wisconsin

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 11:00 AM-12:00 PM
Carroll University



EARLY BIRD | \$250 through Oct 27
REGULAR BIRD | \$275 Oct 28 - Dec 1
LATE BIRD | \$300 after Dec 1



EARLY BIRD | \$250 through Oct 27
REGULAR BIRD | \$275 Oct 28 - Dec 1
LATE BIRD | \$300 after Dec 1



GRADES 5-8

GRADES 5-8



ACTING: LOST STORIES

Some stories stand the test of time, while others slowly fade away. Explore forgotten tales, literary classics, and hidden gems through scene work, character exploration, and imagination.

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 10:00-11:00 AM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

IMPROVISATION

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

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 12:45 PM-1:45 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

MUSICAL THEATER: MOVIE MUSICALS

From classic favorites to modern hits, experience the magic of movie musicals from the inside out! Explore songs, choreography, and characters from some of the most memorable movie musicals.

Jan 21 - Feb 25 | Thu, 4:30-5:30 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 11:30-12:30PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 9:30 AM-10:30 AM
Concordia University Wisconsin



EARLY BIRD | \$250 through Oct 27

REGULAR BIRD | \$275 Oct 28 - Dec 1

LATE BIRD | \$300 after Dec 1



GRADES 5-12



STAGE COMBAT: SWORDS

Learn how to fight like a pirate! Stage combat is the art of creating stunts, falls, and fights—safely. Explore sword techniques to tell classic swashbuckling stories.

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 1:30-2:30 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

CLOWNING

What if making a mistake was the best thing that could happen? Embrace the unexpected and explore the art of clowning through play, curiosity, and physical comedy.

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 11:15 AM-12:15 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center



EARLY BIRD | \$250 through Oct 27
REGULAR BIRD | \$275 Oct 28 - Dec 1
LATE BIRD | \$300 after Dec 1

READY FOR MORE?

**School Year Intensive auditions
happen in August of each year!**

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 through May each year and include:

- **Young Company** (Grades 8-12)
- **Young Actors Studio** (Grades 5-9)
- **Organized Chaos** (Grades 6-12)
- **Production Design** (Grades 7-12)
- **Advanced Musical Theater** (Grades 9-12)

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

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.

Jan 23 - Feb 27 | Sat, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM
Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

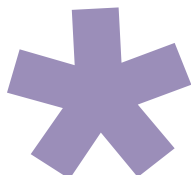
Special registration form required – to register, contact nextsteps@firststage.org or call (414) 267-2941.

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.



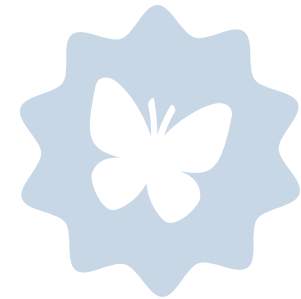
TUITION | \$325

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.

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





First Stage Milwaukee, Inc.
325 W. Walnut St.
Milwaukee, WI 53212



Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Milwaukee, WI
Permit No. 5780