



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**First Stage's award-winning Young Company
presents**

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

-Delight in Shakespeare's enchanting comedy this holiday season-

Milwaukee, WI – November 30, 2022 – First Stage's Young Company, the Theater Academy's award-winning training program for advanced high school actors, will present **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**, one of Shakespeare's most popular and influential plays. The play will be performed in the recently renovated, theater-in-the round Goodman Mainstage Hall at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center. Noted Wisconsin director/actor, Associate Artistic Director at Northern Sky Theater and First Stage alum **Molly Rhode** will direct this production. In **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**, audiences will follow the misadventures of fairies, nobles and craftsmen through the forests of Athens over the course of one magical evening. Love triangles, mistaken identities and alarming transformations abound in Shakespeare's most enchanting comedy. Sponsored by the **United Performing Arts Fund**.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM runs **December 9 – 18** at Goodman Mainstage Hall, **Milwaukee Youth Arts Center**, located at 325 W. Walnut Street in downtown Milwaukee. Tickets are \$15. Tickets are available online at firststage.org or through the First Stage Box Office at (414) 267-2961. *Performance runtime is approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes plus a brief intermission. Suggested for families and young people ages 11+.*

From Director of the Young Company Matt Daniels: "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM is one of Shakespeare's most enduring and popular plays for a reason. It is full of fun, fantasy, mischief and beautiful language, making it a perfect fit for our award-winning Young Company. I first

encountered this play as an actor when I was in high school, and it left an indelible mark, setting me on a path to a life rich in Shakespeare's work. I trust it will be the same for these seasoned young artists."

Added **Director Molly Rhode**: "At 14 years old, I was an original student of the Theater Academy when First Stage opened its doors to students in the summer of 1992. I feel so lucky that my teen years intersected with the creation of the Academy. It changed my life. The teachers I met that summer remain some of my most powerful mentors today. Returning to work with the Young Company feels like reconnecting with my roots. These students are exceptional. It's a real honor to be their guide through this production."

This is a **Young Company Performance Project** – an actor-driven presentation using elemental production values. By stripping down to a nearly bare stage, the connection of actor to audience is enhanced, and the words of the play come alive in exciting ways, allowing First Stage's award-winning students to showcase their graduate level skills with full-length material, from Shakespeare to American classics to pieces commissioned specially for them.

BIOGRAPHIES

Molly Rhode (Director) is a former Theater Academy student and young performer; and she always loves returning to First Stage, where she has previously directed THE AMAZING LEMONADE GIRL, THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER: THE MUSICAL, ANATOLE!, MISS NELSON IS MISSING! and JUST A LITTLE CRITTER MUSICAL. Onstage at First Stage, Molly last appeared at Mrs. Wormwood in MATILDA THE MUSICAL. Molly works all over Wisconsin and is the Associate Artistic Director at Northern Sky Theater, where she specializes in new play development.

Matt Daniels (Director of the Young Company) is a frequent collaborator at First Stage, as an actor (A WRINKLE IN TIME, BIG RIVER, THE MIRACULOUS JOURNEY OF EDWARD TULANE, A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS, ELLA ENCHANTED, SHREK THE MUSICAL and A MIDNIGHT CRY, among others), director and movement director (ELEPHANT AND PIGGIE'S "WE ARE IN A PLAY!", Roald Dahl's JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH, THE SNOW, RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER™: THE MUSICAL, among others), and Director of the Young Company, where he teaches and directs (THE MIRACLE WORKER, HENRY V, ANIMAL FARM, TXT U L8R and OUR TOWN, among others). Matt's other acting credits include appearances at Milwaukee Repertory Theater, (now appearing as Scrooge in The Rep's annual production of A CHRISTMAS CAROL), Skylight Music Theatre, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Milwaukee Opera Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, In Tandem Theater and Milwaukee Shakespeare, as well as Forward Theater, Kentucky Repertory Theatre, Lake Geneva Theater Company, several regional Shakespeare Festivals and on many independent stages in New York. In addition to First Stage, his directing work has been seen at Door Shakespeare, Marquette University, MCT's New Play Development series and in New York with his company Tyrannosaurus rep. When at home, he enjoys making

music with Il Bazzone's Jumping Flea Circus. Matt is a graduate of the Juilliard School Drama Division. mattdanielsonline.com

The Young Company cast for A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM includes: **Angel Rivera** (Milwaukee) as Helena; **Alice Rivera** (Milwaukee) as Hermia; **John Eash-Scott** (Wauwatosa) as Demetrius; **Elena Marking** (Franklin) as Lysander; **Lola Onorato** (Milwaukee) as Egeus; **Rose Campbell** (Whitefish Bay) as Hippolyta/Fairy; **Sabrina Borg** (Cedarburg) as Theseus/Oberon; **Amelia Eichmeier** (Mequon) as Titania; **Josie Van Slyke** (Milwaukee) Robin Goodfellow, a puck; **Maya Thomure** (Whitefish Bay) as Peter Quince; **Zachary Nowacek** (Wauwatosa) as Nick Bottom; **Lucy Kuhnen-Grooms** (Shorewood) Francis Flute/Peaseblossom; **Ella Vitrano** (Greendale) Tom Snout/Cobweb; **William Swoboda** (Milwaukee) Snug/Moth and **Mara Holzen** (Wauwatosa) Robin Starveling/Musterseed.

The Creative Team for A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM includes: **Molly Rhode** (Director); **Matt Daniels** (Director of the Young Company); **Shane O'Neil** (Lighting Coordinator); **Latora Lezotte** (Costume Coordinator); **Josh Schmidt** (Sound Coordinator) and **Carrie Johns** (Stage Manager).

Tickets are \$15 – Tickets may be purchased at firststage.org or by phone **(414) 267-2961**.

COVID Protocols: First Stage is no longer requiring proof of vaccination upon arrival and masks will be optional in the theater, unless the community level in Milwaukee County is rated in the High category, as determined by the CDC. First Stage COVID safety protocols and updates can be viewed here: firststage.org/plan-your-visit/safety-security/-performances

Digital Playbill: The digital playbill includes artistic/actor/designer and cast bios. To view the digital playbill when it gets posted closer to the show opening, please go to: firststage.org/about-us/media-center/playbills/

Enrichment Guide: An Enrichment Guide for the production can be found here: firststage.org/media/v3wbg3t0/midsummer_enrichmentguide.pdf

Special event for A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Pay What You Choose Performance: Friday, December 16, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

Pay What You Choose tickets are available on a first come, first served basis with a minimum suggested donation of \$5 per person. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. on the day of the performance. Patrons are encouraged to arrive early. Tickets may also be reserved in advance by phone at **(414) 267-2961**, weekdays 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. To learn more visit: firststage.org/events-tickets/tickets-offers/pay-what-you-choose/

FACT SHEET

What: First Stage's Young Company presents: **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**

By **William Shakespeare**

Directed by **Molly Rhode**

Director of the Young Company **Matt Daniels**

Sponsored by the **United Performing Arts Fund**

Location: Goodman Mainstage Hall, Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, 325 W. Walnut Street, Milwaukee

Live Performances: December 9 – 18, 2022

Description: Follow the misadventures of fairies, nobles and craftsmen through the forests of Athens over the course of one magical evening. Love triangles, mistaken identities and alarming transformations abound in Shakespeare's most enchanting comedy.

This is a **Young Company Performance Project** – an actor-driven presentation using elemental production values. By stripping down to a nearly bare stage, the connection of actor to audience is enhanced, and the words of the play come alive in exciting ways, allowing First Stage's award-winning students to showcase their graduate level skills with full-length material, from Shakespeare to American classics to pieces commissioned specially for them. *Performance runtime is approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes plus a brief intermission. Suggested for families and young people ages 11+.*

Performances:

- Friday, December 9 at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, December 10 at 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, December 11 at 3:30 p.m.
- Friday, December 16 at 7:00 p.m. – *PAY WHAT YOU CHOOSE PERFORMANCE*
- Saturday, December 17 at 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, December 18 at 3:30 p.m.

Ticket and information: Tickets are \$15. Call (414) 267-2961 or online at: firststage.org

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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.

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). firststage.org

About Young Company

First Stage Young Company, the Theater Academy's award-winning training program for advanced high school actors, is open to students who want to take their work to the next level. Accepted students will complete college and graduate-level training in Acting, Voice, Movement and Shakespeare as well as electives ranging from Auditioning to Stage Combat to Dialects. Traditionally, the Young Company hosts master classes with guest artists from across the nation, produces a season of three plays and facilitates special excursions to the Utah Shakespeare Festival and American Players Theatre. To learn more, please visit:

firststage.org/theater-academy/young-company/