



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**First Stage proudly presents the
world premiere production
THE FORGOTTEN GIRL**

-Mysterious ghost story comes to Milwaukee Youth Arts Center just in time for Halloween-

Milwaukee, WI – October 12, 2023 – First Stage, 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, opens **THE FORGOTTEN GIRL**, a world premiere based on the award-winning book by **India Hill Brown** and adapted for the stage by accomplished playwright **Idris Goodwin**. Directed by noted director **Jon Royal**, **THE FORGOTTEN GIRL** is a mysterious ghost story perfect for this haunting time of year. On a cold winter night, Iris and her best friend, Daniel, play in the freshly fallen snow in the woods when they stumble upon the gravestone of a young girl, Avery Moore. Strange things begin to happen, and Iris and Daniel research the area to find answers. They learn of their town’s history of segregation and become determined to restore Avery’s grave and pay proper respect for her and others buried there. A ghostly story with a historical twist, this empowering tale examines the connection of past and present, friendship and forgiveness.

THE FORGOTTEN GIRL runs **October 20 – November 12, 2023** in the newly renovated, theater-in-the-round Goodman Mainstage Hall, **Milwaukee Youth Arts Center**, located at 325 W. Walnut Street in downtown Milwaukee. Tickets are \$22. Tickets are available online at firststage.org or through the First Stage Box Office at **(414) 267-2961**. *Performance run time is approximately 75 minutes with a brief intermission. Suggested for adults, teens and children ages 10 – 12.*

This play was Commissioned by First Stage as part of its [Amplify Play Series](#) – First Stage’s ongoing commitment to the development of new work, with an intentional focus on lifting voices of diverse playwrights and artists and developed in partnership with Seattle Children's Theatre.

Director **Jon Royal** had this to say about the play: “THE FORGOTTEN GIRL is a mystery that two young people are working against the clock to solve. The dynamics of their own lives split them apart as they are trying find answers to questions, that their own local history has posed. It’s a strong reflection on the value of friendship and community. Iris desperately wants to be seen and known by the people in her life. When her friend Daniel, the person who knows her best, doubts and doesn’t support her, it leaves her open to the ghost of Avery Moore – a spirit, unable to rest, and seeking validation of her own.”

From Artistic Director **Jeff Frank**: “In browsing the [Niche Book Bar](#), I came across the book and immediately fell in love with it and reached out about acquiring the dramatic rights. I’m excited to have nationally recognized playwright Idris Goodwin adapt this ghost story/mystery that is also grounded in the reckonings of our social history. It is a powerful examination of friendship, those who are overlooked and the price of both.”

BIOGRAPHIES

India Hill Brown (Author) is an author with a passion for writing, reading and all things literary. Her debut novel, *The Forgotten Girl*, has been nominated for an NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work in Youth/Teens and a 2020 ALSC Notable Children’s Book. She graduated from Claflin University with a Bachelor’s Degree in Mass Communications and with a Concentration in Print Journalism. indiahillbrown.com

Idris Goodwin (Playwright) is a multiple award-winning playwright, breakbeat poet, content creator and arts champion. A 2021 United States Artist Fellow, Goodwin is recognized as a culture bearer who celebrates community values and cultivates histories with care. Idris is the author of over 60 original plays ranging from his Hip Hop inspired breakbeat series, (PARENTAL ADVISORY: A BREAKBEAT PLAY now playing at Milwaukee Rep through October 29), to historical dramas to works for young audiences. Titles such as AND IN THIS CORNER: CASSIUS CLAY; HOW WE GOT ON; HYPE MAN: A BREAK BEAT PLAY; THIS IS MODERN ART; and the ground-breaking FREE PLAY: OPEN-SOURCE SCRIPTS FOR AN ANTIRACIST TOMORROW; are widely produced across the country by a diverse mix of professional theaters, academic environments and non-traditional spaces alike. Goodwin’s created original content for and/or appeared on Nickelodeon, HBO’s *Def Poetry*, *Sesame Street*, NPR, BBC Radio and the Discovery Channel. *Your House is Not Just A House*, his first picture book, will be published by Harper Collins in 2024. Passionate about cultivating new audiences in the arts, Idris is currently the Artistic Director of Seattle Children’s Theatre. He has also served as Executive Director of The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College (the first Black man to hold the position in its 100-year history). Prior to that, Goodwin served two seasons as Producing Artistic

Director at StageOne Family Theatre in Louisville, Kentucky. Idris sits on the board of the Children's Theatre Foundation Association and was recently named Board President of Theatre for Young Audiences/USA.

Jon Royal (Director) is a teaching artist and facilitator from Nashville, TN who is thrilled to be working with First Stage! He was named Best Theatre Director by the Nashville Scene for the year 2019. Directing credits include THE JONAH PEOPLE (World Premiere), FENCES, PIPELINE, TOPDOG/UNDERDOG, SMART PEOPLE, CITIZEN: AN AMERICAN LYRIC, GHOST (World Premiere), AND IN THIS CORNER: CASSIUS CLAY, ROSA PARKS AND THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT, OTHELLO, PASSING STRANGE, THE COLORED MUSEUM, HAIRSPRAY, ONCE ON THIS ISLAND, TWELFTH NIGHT, CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS, A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY, AS YOU LIKE IT, HANGING MARY (World Premiere), PROOF and JUNGALBOOK. Jon is a past winner of the American College Theatre Festival's Regional Student Directing Award. In 2016, he was a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation's National Observership Class, in which he had the privilege of shadowing Liesl Tommy on the Public Theatre's production of PARTY PEOPLE. He also produced and directed the concert documentary *Walk Together Children: The 150th Anniversary of The Fisk Jubilee Singers* (PBS). Jon has been working with young people for over thirty years and serves as a teaching artist for Nashville Children's Theatre, Tennessee Performing Arts Center Education, Global Education Center and Shakespeare Center Los Angeles.

ADULT CAST

Sherrick Robinson* (Daddy/Mr. Hammond); **Alexandria King*** (Mama) and **Cynthia Cobb*** (Suga). Understudy for Alexandria King is **Brielle Esther Richmond**. Understudy for Cynthia Cobb is **Brandite Reed**.

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

YOUNG PERFORMER CASTS

Young Performer roles are double cast. Young Performers in the Angel Cast include: **Noeloni-Aniya Heard** (Milwaukee) as Iris; **Jessimia Page** (Milwaukee) as Daniel; **Gwendolyn Taylor** (Milwaukee) as Vashti; **Amirah Muhammad** (Milwaukee) as Avery; **Eva Dahlberg** (Franklin) as Heather; **Fiona Fouliard** (Shorewood) as Sarah; **Gladys McAdams** (Cedarburg) as Shadow Ensemble; **Halo Green** (Brown Deer) as Shadow Ensemble; **Narjaun Smith** (Milwaukee) as Shadow Ensemble and **Daisy Lopez Serrano** (Milwaukee) as Shadow Ensemble.

Young Performers in the Snow Cast include: **Madison Jones** (Milwaukee) as Iris; **Santana Marie Hayden** (Milwaukee) as Daniel; **Estelle Brown** (Wauwatosa) as Vashti; **Gia Deacon** (Milwaukee) as Avery; **Abbie Cashman** (Shorewood) as Heather; **Cora Peplin** (Random Lake) as Sarah; **Ricki Simonton** (Milwaukee) as Shadow Ensemble; **Elliot Lippman** (Shorewood) as Shadow

Ensemble; **Reed Sturrock** (Milwaukee) as Shadow Ensemble and **Kayle Phillips** (Milwaukee) as Shadow Ensemble.

The Artistic & Creative Team for **THE FORGOTTEN GIRL** includes: **Jon Royal** (Director); **Amaya** (Scenic Designer); **Jazmin Aurora Medina** (Costume Designer); **Jarred Gooding** (Lighting Designer); **Kevin O'Donnell** (Sound Designer); **Madeline M. Scott*** (Stage Manager) and **Aminah Rockett** (Assistant Stage Manager).

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Tickets are \$22 – Tickets may be purchased at firststage.org or by phone **(414) 267-2961**.

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/

Please note: Please refer to the digital playbill for updates on any cast changes as well as for the appropriate pronouns for actors.

Special events for THE FORGOTTEN GIRL

Pay What You Choose Performance: Friday, October 27, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Pay What You Choose tickets are available on a first come, first served basis with a minimum suggested ticket price of \$10 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/

Sensory Friendly Performance: Saturday, November 4, 2023 at 3:30 p.m.

A Sensory Friendly Performance with accommodations for families with children on the autism spectrum will take place on **Saturday, November 4, 2023** at 3:30 p.m. Sensory accommodations include a quiet area staffed by an experienced educator, adjusted sound and lighting, and more. Tickets for Sensory Friendly Performances are \$10. Order online or by phone at (414) 267-2961, weekdays 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. to reserve tickets. To learn more visit: firststage.org/plan-your-visit/sensory-friendly-performances/

ASL Interpreted Performance: Sunday, November 12, 2023 at 3:30 p.m.

This performance will be sign language interpreted for patrons who are deaf or hard of hearing. Assistive listening devices are also available at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center. To learn more, please visit: firststage.org/plan-your-visit/accessibility/sign-language-interpreted-performances/

FACT SHEET

Title: THE FORGOTTEN GIRL

By India Hill Brown

Adapted by **Idris Goodwin**

Presented by special arrangement with Scholastic Inc.

Commissioned by First Stage and developed in partnership with Seattle Children's Theatre

Directed by **Jon Royal**

This play was developed through the [Amplify Play Series](#) — First Stage's ongoing commitment to the development of new work, with an intentional focus on lifting voices of diverse playwrights and artists.

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

Live Performances: October 20 – November 12, 2023

Description: On a cold winter night, Iris and her best friend, Daniel, play in the freshly fallen snow in the woods when they stumble upon the gravestone of a young girl, Avery Moore. Strange things begin to happen, and Iris and Daniel research the area to find answers. They learn of their town's history of segregation and become determined to restore Avery's grave and pay proper respect for her and others buried there. A ghostly story with a historical twist, this empowering tale examines the connection of past and present, friendship and forgiveness. *Performance run time is approximately 75 minutes with a brief intermission. Suggested for adults, teens and children ages 10 – 12.*

Performances:

- Friday, October 20 at 7:00 p.m. – *OPENING*
- Saturday, October 21 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, October 22 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Friday, October 27 at 7:00 p.m. – *PAY WHAT YOU CHOOSE PERFORMANCE*
- Saturday, October 28 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, October 29 at 1:00 p.m.
- Saturday, November 4 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *SENSORY FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE AT 3:30 P.M.*
- Sunday, November 5 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, November 11 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, November 12 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *ASL PERFORMANCE AT 3:30 P.M.*

Ticket and information: Tickets are \$22. 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 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 autistic young people. 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 ensures that all programming is not only accessible to its community but that it is reflective of the community it serves. In order to do that, First Stage relies on its community of donors. With an annual operating budget of \$5 million, more than half of First Stage's revenue comes from generous contributions from individuals, corporations, foundations, government sources and the United Performing Arts Fund. Join First Stage's community of donors with [a contribution today](#) and transform lives through theater.

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