



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**First Stage's award-winning Young Company presents**  
**HENRY IV, PART 1**

*-Full of soaring language, epic battles and hilarious hijinks, this play has something for everyone-*

**Milwaukee, WI – November 16, 2023** – First Stage's Young Company, the Theater Academy's award-winning training program for advanced high school actors, will present its first production of the 2023/24 season, Shakespeare's riveting play **HENRY IV, PART 1**. The production will be directed by multi-disciplinary artist and First Stage Young Company core faculty member **Marcella Kearns**, with fight choreography provided by **Christopher Elst**. With his crown under threat from enemies both foreign and domestic, Henry IV prepares for war. As he prepares to defend his crown, his son Prince Hal bails on his responsibilities at Court to hang out in taverns with a gang of ne'er-do-wells, chief of whom is the notorious Sir John Falstaff. With the onset of war, Hal must confront his responsibilities to family and throne. Power, honor and rebellion reign in Shakespeare's historical epic of royal succession. Sponsored by **United Performing Arts Fund**.

**HENRY IV, PART 1** runs **December 8 – 17, 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 just \$15 and are available online at [firststage.org](http://firststage.org) or through the First Stage Box Office at **(414) 267-2961**. *Performance runtime is approximately two hours and 15 minutes with a brief intermission. Suggested for adults and teens.*

From **Marcella Kearns**, Director: "The heart of this play, the king's son Hal, was a teenager when the historical events of this play occurred. I find it extraordinary hearing this cast of actors his age explore national crisis and personal fellowship. In script reads and early rehearsals, they posed deeply human and relevant questions: "How do we react to radical change?" and "Who

owns the language of right and order?" They are connecting deeply to the story of a fellow young person finding his moral compass in a land that's burning."

From **Matt Daniels**, Director of Young Company: "This play is a perfect vehicle to showcase the Young Company's award-winning Shakespearean prowess. Full of soaring language, epic battles and hilarious hijinks, this play has something for everyone."

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 the 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**

**Matt Daniels (Director of Young Company)** is a frequent collaborator at First Stage, as an actor (THE HOBBIT, A WRINKLE IN TIME, BIG RIVER: THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN, 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 GRACIOUS SISTERS, 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, (appearing again as Scrooge in Milwaukee 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](http://mattdanielsonline.com)

**Marcella Kearns (Director)** returns to direct for Young Company after previous classical forays of MACBETH, THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA, ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL and THE WINTER'S TALE. Selected directing credits include projects for Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Third Avenue PlayWorks, First Stage, Door Shakespeare, Marquette University, Carthage College and UW-Milwaukee, including the world premieres of FIGHTING FOR HOME: STORIES OF WOMEN WHO SERVE and GIRLS IN THE BOAT. Artistic Associate of Forward Theater Company in Madison and a core faculty member of Young Company, she is also a member of Actors' Equity Association, a former Fulbright Fellow (Austria) and a 2008 Theatre Communications Group Observership recipient. She holds an MFA in Acting from the University of South Carolina.

The Young Company cast for HENRY IV, PART 1 includes: **Alice Rivera** (Milwaukee) as King Henry IV; **Maya Thomure** (Whitefish Bay) as Prince Hal; **Lola Onorato** (Milwaukee) as Sir John Falstaff; **Max Larson** (Milwaukee) as Henry “Hotspur” Percy; **Lucy Kuhnen-Grooms** (Shorewood) as Gadshill/Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester; **Evie Patrick** (Whitefish Bay) as Peto/Lady Mortimer; **William Swoboda** (Milwaukee) as Bardolph/Edmund Mortimer/Sir Richard Vernon; **Thomas Bastardo** (Saint Francis) as Ned Poins/Lord John of Lancaster; **Paxton Haley** (Milwaukee) as Hostess Quickly/Sir Walter Blunt; **Sophia Bernhardt** (Greendale) as Francis/Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland/Traveler 1; **Abram Nelson** (Whitefish Bay) as Owen Glendower/Traveler 2-Carrier/Servant-Messenger; **Elena Marking** (Franklin) as Earl of Douglas/Lady Percy/Traveler 3 and **Silver Anderson** (Milwaukee) as Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmoreland/Traveler 4/Sheriff.

Understudy for Alice Rivera and Maya Thomure, **Mia Lutz** (Whitefish Bay); Understudy for Lola Onorato, **Sophia Bernhardt** and Understudy for Max Larson, **Thomas Bastardo**.

The Artistic & Creative Team for HENRY IV, PART 1 includes: **Matt Daniels** (Director of Young Company); **Marcella Kearns** (Director); **Christopher Elst, SAFD Certified**, (Fight Choreographer); **Michelle Verbos** (Costume Coordinator); **Marion Frank** (Lighting Coordinator); **Derek Buckles** (Sound Coordinator), **Kayla Salter Giltner** (Dramaturg); **Bree Kazinski** and **Ken Miller** (Assistant Fight Directors) and **Carrie Johns** (Stage Manager).

**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/](http://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.

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

### **Special event for HENRY IV, PART 1**

#### **Pay What You Choose Performance: Friday, December 15 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, please visit: [firststage.org/events-tickets/tickets-offers/pay-what-you-choose/](http://firststage.org/events-tickets/tickets-offers/pay-what-you-choose/)

## **FACT SHEET**

**What:** First Stage’s Young Company presents: HENRY IV, Part 1

By **William Shakespeare**

Directed by **Marcella Kerns**

Director of Young Company **Matt Daniels**

Sponsored by **United Performing Arts Fund**

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

**Live Performances: December 8 – 17, 2023**

**Description:** With his crown under threat from enemies both foreign and domestic, Henry IV prepares for war. As he prepares to defend his crown, his son Prince Hal bails on his responsibilities at Court to hang out in taverns with a gang of ne'er-do-wells, chief of whom is the notorious Sir John Falstaff. With the onset of war, Hal must confront his responsibilities to family and throne. Power, honor and rebellion reign in Shakespeare's historical epic of royal succession. *Performance runtime is approximately two hours and 15 minutes with a brief intermission. Suggested for adults and teens.*

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 our award-winning students to showcase their graduate level skills with full-length material, from Shakespeare to American classics to pieces commissioned specially for them.

**Performances:**

- Friday, December 8 at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, December 9 at 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, December 10 at 3:30 p.m.
- Friday, December 15 at 7:00 p.m. – *PAY WHAT YOU CHOOSE PERFORMANCE*
- Saturday, December 16 at 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, December 17 at 3:30 p.m.

**Ticket and information:** Tickets are \$15. Call (414) 267-2961 or online at: [firststage.org](http://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](http://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/](http://firststage.org/theater-academy/young-company/)