



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First Stage offers unique, engaging livestream performances in

ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND –

A CREATE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE PLAY

-Join protagonist Callaway Brown as she discovers the hero within-

By Finegan Kruckemeyer

Directed by Jeff Frank

Milwaukee, WI – January 19, 2021 – Up next in First Stage’s Virtual Season of Plays is **ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND – A CREATE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE PLAY**, written by award-winning, internationally renowned children’s playwright **Finegan Kruckemeyer** (*THE SNOW*, 2015 and *ANTARCTICA, WI*, 2018). Each performance will be a unique livestream performance where the audience votes at critical times as to the choices protagonist Callaway Brown should make – and the actors will need to respond in the moment and plunge forward. No two performances will be the same.

In this virtual play we find Callaway Brown – an unlikely young hero – who has been stranded on a desert island, and it’s up to the audience to decide what happens next! In this interactive production, audience members vote on Callaway’s actions in an energetic romp through time and space. Will Callaway time travel to the Wild West and meet a talking horse? Develop superpowers and fight crime in the future? Or have a crush on a vampire? This is create-your-own-adventure theatre using your phone – audience members will be voting on the path for the hero. And Callaway’s fate is in their hands! Sponsored by **Children’s Wisconsin**.

Performances for **ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND** will be livestreamed through Broadway On Demand on **January 29 at 7 pm, January 30 at 1 & 3:30 pm, January 31 at 1:00 & 3:30 pm, February 5 at 7 pm and February 6 at 1 & 3:30 pm**. If audiences want to check out a specific adventure, they can also choose a recorded episode (with description) – available to stream

through **February 28, 2021**. Tickets are available for \$15, \$25 or \$40. Patrons are encouraged to choose the price point that best fits their family and budget. Ticket buyers will receive an access code to stream this performance through the streaming service Broadway On Demand. Tickets can be purchased online at www.firststage.org or by phone at **(414) 267-2961**. *Performance runtime is approximately 65 minutes. Recommended for families with young people ages 6+.*

New this year: **Family All-Access Pass Membership** includes streaming access to this and all other virtual productions this season and starts at \$200 per household. More information is available at: www.firststage.org/membership.

In giving some background on this unique virtual production, Director **Jeff Frank** had this to say: “A typical First Stage play is 50 pages and this has over 200 because of the create-your-own-adventure component. The play reminds me of the old time radio/TV serials – *Flash Gordon*, *The Green Hornet*, etc. with adventure and cliffhanger moments throughout. We also looked at the world of graphic novels and comic books for inspiration. Through the use of OBS, (Open Broadcast Software), we’ve basically created a living graphic novel – with illustrated backgrounds and animations and the characters appearing and storytelling in frames that we can move all around the screen. It has been quite remarkable to see all of the elements come together.”

He added, “Part of the magic of live theater is the danger of it all. What happens if something goes wrong? In the digital realm, it may feel that some of that magic and danger is gone. Well – that is definitely not the case with this play – the actors will need to be on their toes at all times! With this virtual play audiences will be able to come back and watch repeatedly if they hope to see all of the adventures of the hero. ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND is truly inventive, consistently engaging and always funny.”

Playwright **Finegan Kruckemeyer** shared some insight into his protagonist Callaway Brown: “I like heroes who don’t realize they are a hero, who are often overlooked and it’s thrust upon them. They don’t fit in. They haven’t proven themselves to be great in their own life. But if a big adventure were to befall them, could they prove themselves to be great? I have faith in characters that don’t tell you everything at the start, but then as we go on a journey together with them, we discover more about them. My plays often have both internal and external explorations. One kind of assists the other – if you have somebody who doesn’t think they are worthy of being a hero and then they’re thrown into a situation where they discover they can be and they’re also going on a journey – that’s very exciting to me as a playwright! So inside they are changing and they are becoming braver with every step on the outside. I like protagonists who choose a different path and take the braver option.”

BIOGRAPHIES

Finegan Kruckemeyer (Playwright) has had 96 commissioned plays performed on six continents and translated into eight languages. First Stage credits include ANTARCTICA and THE SNOW. He has received 36 awards (at least one each year since 2002) including the 2017 Mickey Miners

Lifetime Achievement Award for services to international theatre for young audiences, the 2015 David Williamson Award for Excellence in Australian Playwriting and an inaugural Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship. In 2021, 29 seasons of 18 plays (including four world premieres) will be presented globally, in eight countries and five languages. To date, Finegan's plays have had seasons in: 200 international festivals; all Australian states/territories; eight US national tours; five UK national tours; and at the Sydney Opera House (six works), Scotland's Imagine Festival (four works), New York's Lincoln Center for the Arts (three works), DC's Kennedy Center for the Arts (three works), Ireland's Abbey Theatre (two works) and Shanghai's Malan Flower Theatre (two works). As well as the Mickey Miners and David Williamson Awards and Sidney Myer Fellowship, Finegan and his work have received seven Australian Writers Guild (AWGIE) Awards, an honorary Tasmanian Theatre Award for Exceptional Writing, 2012 Helpmann Award for Children's Theatre, 2010 Rodney Seaborn Award, 2009 Mystate Young Tasmanian Artist Award, 2006 Jill Blewett Playwrights Award and 2002 Colin Thiele Scholarship. He is committed to making strong and respectful work for children, which acknowledges them as astute audience members outside the play and worthy subjects within.

Jeff Frank (Director/Artistic Director) is recognized as one of the top directors in the field with an expertise in developing new work for theater for young audiences. He holds a BFA in Theater from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and an MFA in Child Drama from the University of Utah. Having served as First Stage's Education and Academy Director from 1996 – 2003 and as First Stage's Artistic Director since February 2003, Jeff remains committed to the power of theater to transform lives and is forever thankful to call First Stage home.

Matt Daniels (Man) is a frequent collaborator and Artistic Associate at First Stage, as an actor (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 (Roald Dahl's JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH, THE SNOW, RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER™: THE MUSICAL, among others) and Director of First Stage's Young Company, where he teaches and directs (ELEPHANT & PIGGIE'S "WE ARE IN A PLAY!", THE MIRACLE WORKER, HENRY V, ANIMAL FARM, TXT U L&R, among others). Matt's other acting credits include appearances at Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Milwaukee Opera Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, In Tandem Theatre 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, MCT's New Play Development series, Sunset Playhouse 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. www.MattDanielsOnline.com.

Nadja Simmonds (Woman) is excited to be back with First Stage after her debut in LOCOMOTION during the 2019/20 season. She left her hometown of Cincinnati to attend Marquette University and received degrees in both theater and digital media. Since then, she has worked with regional theaters around Wisconsin including Forward Theater, Milwaukee

Repertory Theater, Northern Sky Theater, Summit Players Theatre and the Children's Theater of Madison. Recently, she proudly participated in the inaugural Milwaukee Black Theater Festival and made her CATCO debut with A COLUMBUS CHRISTMAS CAROL. Lots of love goes to her family and those continuously fighting for justice and equality. Black Lives Matter. nadjasimmonds.com.

David Flores (Ensemble) has performed extensively with many Milwaukee theater, music and dance companies including The Alchemist Theatre, Boulevard Theatre, Cornerstone Theatre, First Stage, In Tandem, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Milwaukee Shakespeare, Off The Wall Theatre, Optimist Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, Theater X, Theatre Gigante, Windfall Theatre, Florentine Opera, Milwaukee Opera Theatre and Wild Space Dance. Credits include everything from Albee to *Die Zauberflöte*, Shakespeare to Sondheim. He has also served as stage director for well-received productions with Boulevard Theatre, Milwaukee Opera Theatre and Windfall Theatre. He previously appeared with First Stage in the world-premiere of LUCHADORA!

ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND features First Stage Young Performers **Loralei Madson** (West Allis) as Callaway Brown; **Eleanor Hannan** (Wauwatosa) as Teen Girl and **Liam Eddy** (Hartland) as Young Boy.

The Artistic Staff for ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND features Includes: **Jeff Frank** (Director/Artistic Director); **Kristin Ellert** (Projections/Props Designer); **Elizabeth Weidner** (Sound Designer); **Jazmin Aurora Medina** (Costume Designer); **Tim Thisleton** (OBS Programmer); **Melissa L. Wanke**, Member of Actors' Equity Association (Stage Manager) and **Megan Harris** (Assistant Stage Manager).

For more information about any of the offerings for **Through Our Lens – A First Stage Virtual Performance Series** or about buying a Family All-Access Pass, please visit www.firststage.org or call **(414) 267-2961**. To see the schedule the 2020/21 Virtual Season of Plays, please visit: firststage.org/virtualseries2021.

FACT SHEET

About: ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND

Dates: Streaming January 29 through February 28, 2021

Stream it live: January 29 at 7 pm, January 30 at 1 & 3:30 pm, January 31 at 1:00 & 3:30 pm
February 5 at 7 pm and February 6 at 1 & 3:30 pm

Recorded episodes will be available to stream through February 28, 2021.

Description: Callaway Brown – an unlikely young hero – has been stranded on a desert island, and it’s up to YOU to decide what happens next! In this interactive production, audience members vote on Callaway’s actions in an energetic romp through time and space. Will Callaway time travel to the Wild West and meet a talking horse? Develop superpowers and fight crime in the future? Or have a crush on a vampire? The choice is yours! This is create-your-own-adventure theatre, through your computer or your phone – you’ll be voting on the path for our hero. But think carefully before you make your choice. Callaway’s fate is in your hands! *Performance runtime is approximately 65 minutes. Recommended for families with young people ages 6+.*

Tickets and information: Tickets are available for \$15, \$25 or \$40. Patrons are encouraged to choose the price point that best fits their family and budget. Ticket buyers will receive an access code to stream this performance through the streaming service Broadway On Demand. Tickets can be purchased online at www.firststage.org or by phone at **(414) 267-2961**. Family All-Access Pass memberships are also available.

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About First Stage

First Stage is one of the nation’s leading theaters for young people and families. First Stage touches hearts, engages minds and transforms lives by creating extraordinary theater experiences through professional theater productions that inspire, enlighten and entertain. Its Theater Academy, the nation’s largest high-impact theater training program for young people, fosters life skills through stage skills and serves nearly 2,000 students each year. As Wisconsin’s leader in arts-integrated education in schools, First Stage’s dynamic Theater in Education programs promote literacy, character building and experiential learning throughout the curriculum, serving over 20,000 students each year. First Stage was selected to participate in the Partners in Education program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (2012), and was the recipient of the *Milwaukee Business Journal’s* Eureka Award, recognizing creativity and innovation in business, education and the arts for its Next Steps program for students on the autism spectrum (2013, 2015). 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). www.firststage.org.