



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First Stage Streams Shakespeare's Adventurous, Romantic Comedy

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

-Featuring First Stage's Award-winning Young Company-

By William Shakespeare

Directed by Marcella Kearns

Milwaukee, WI – December 1, 2020 – Next up in First Stage's 2020/21 Virtual Season of Plays is **THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA**, one of Shakespeare's earliest plays. This adventurous, romantic comedy has it all – love, betrayal, hidden identities, a gang of gentlemen outlaws – even a double wedding! As Young Company Director **Matt Daniels** described it, "THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA is a comedy about young people making mistakes as they venture into the world on their own for the first time, making it incredibly relatable for First Stage high schoolers who are about to embark on college adventures. As one of Shakespeare's earliest plays, the language is immediate and accessible, and the play's heroine, Julia, is the prototype for some of Shakespeare's greatest leading ladies, including Viola in TWELFTH NIGHT and Rosalind in AS YOU LIKE IT. Plus, there are hijinks with a dog named Crab!"

The production of THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA is a Young Company Performance Project, an actor-driven presentation that uses limited production elements allowing the connection between actor and audience to be enhanced emphasizing the power of the spoken word to come alive in exciting ways. First Stage's Young Company Performance Projects are sponsored by **United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF)**.

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA streams **December 4 – December 14, 2020**. Performances will be livestreamed through Broadway On Demand on Friday, December 4 at 7 pm, Saturday, December 5 at 7 pm and Sunday, December 6 at 3:30 pm. A recorded performance will be available to stream through Monday, December 14. 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 two hours including a 10-minute intermission. Suggested for families with young people ages 13+.*

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.

Director **Marcella Kearns** shared these thoughts on directing THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA: “This early Shakespeare has afforded the Young Company a chance both to exercise their verbal virtuosity and to knock at what it means to make this play in 2020. From how women are regarded in this play’s world to what it means to love – and, ultimately, what it means to be a gentleman or a gentle man – the acting company has plumbed it all. They are so brave.

We’ve worked entirely virtually – from auditions through the plan to livestream. As a result, this Young Company Performance Project has freed up some things and presented restrictions on others with which we have to find a way to operate creatively. What’s freeing? More time to dig into text, to discuss story, than we usually allow ourselves on a process. I have found the actors’ exploration of this piece rich.”

She continued, “What, on the other hand, is restricting? The performance medium, of course. Learning to act to a device’s camera – therefore without the benefit of visually connecting to one’s scene partner – is a skill and a frustration they experience. Learning to be their own assistant stage managers, lighting designers, scenic coordinators and more as they set up their own space to work has challenged them and required great ingenuity. I feel with every rehearsal that we inch closer to the technical singularity, ha!

One aspect of this project about which I have a special care: we have a host of understudies/swings who are preparing multiple roles, ready to step in if for any reason their principal actor can’t be present for a rehearsal or performance. While First Stage routinely doubles its Young Performer casts for its main stage and First Steps productions, the Young Company rarely does. I wanted to broaden opportunity and offer additional YC members the chance to study and be a part of this process. The work of the understudy is very often unsung and always invisible until the work of that understudy is needed. The understudy team of THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA is building a professional skill, and they are working just as hard as their principals. I couldn’t be prouder.”

BIOGRAPHIES

Marcella Kearns (Director) is a Milwaukee-based director, actor and theatre educator. Marcy serves as the Associate Artistic Director of Milwaukee Chamber Theatre and an adjunct instructor of theatre at Carthage College and Marquette University. At First Stage, she is a

faculty member for the acclaimed Young Company and last appeared onstage in SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE BAKER STREET IRREGULARS. Previous directing credits at First Stage include THE WINTER'S TALE, ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL, MOCKINGBIRD, LILLY'S PURPLE PLASTIC PURSE, and the world premiere of GIRLS IN THE BOAT. A proud member of Actors' Equity Association, she completed a Fulbright Fellowship in Austria and holds an MFA from the University of South Carolina.

Matt Daniels (Director of Young Company) 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 L8R, 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.

Jeff Frank (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.

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA features First Stage Young Performers **Zachary Nowacek** (Wauwatosa) as Valentine; **Liam Jeninga** (Delevan) as Proteus; **Selma Rivera** (Milwaukee) as Speed; **Eloise Field** (Oconomowoc) as Julia; **Elisheva Scheuer** (Bayside) as Lucetta and Outlaw Secundus; **Jonathan Edwards** (Milwaukee) as Antonio; **Loralei Madson** (West Allis) as Panthino and Outlaw Tertius; **Madison Uphoff** (Madison) as Silvia; **Nicholas Hollenbeck** (Oconomowoc) as Launce; **Morgan McKinnis** (Grafton) as Thurio; **Kate Ketelhohn** (Cedarburg) as The Duke of Milan; **Magdalyn Rowley-Lange** (Milwaukee) as Ursula, Outlaw Primus and Milan inn host and **Jonathan Edwards** (Milwaukee) as Eglamour. **Sabrina Borg** (Cedarburg) as understudy for Antonio/Eglamour/The Duke of Milan/Lucetta/Outlaw Secundus; **Lainie Slipper** (Oconomowoc) as understudy for Silvia/Launce/Milan inn Host/Ursula/Outlaw Primus; **Costello Mylott** (Milwaukee) as understudy for Proteus/Valentino/Thurio and **Molly McVey** (Bayside) as understudy for Julia/Speed/Panthino/Outlaw Tertius.

This production also features Loki as Crab the Dog.

The Artistic Staff for THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA features Includes: **Marcella Kearns** (Director); **Matt Daniels** (Director of Young Company); **Derek Buckles** (Sound Coordinator); **Michelle Pendzich** (Costume Coordinator); **Natalie Mayo** (Show Production Manager); **Jessica Noones** (Production Manager); **Melissa L. Wanke**, Member of Actors' Equity Association, (Virtual Production Coordinator) and **Lindy Girman** (Virtual Production Intern).

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: THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

Dates: Streaming December 4 through December 14, 2020

Stream it live: December 4 at 7 pm, December 5 at 7 pm and December 6 at 3:30 pm

Stream the recorded performance through December 14.

Description: Betrayal. Love. Disguise. Join First Stage's award-winning Young Company as they present one of Shakespeare's earliest and least performed plays. *Performance runtime is approximately two hours including a 10-minute intermission. Suggested for families with young people ages 13+.*

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.