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Coming to Milwaukee's First Stage this February

THE CRUCIBLE

-Arthur Miller's riveting, fictionalized account of the Salem witch trials-

By Arthur Miller

Directed by Ann Joseph-Douglas

Milwaukee, WI – February 3, 2021 – Next up in First Stage's **Through Our Lens** 2021 Virtual Season of Plays will be Arthur Miller's powerful and timely drama **THE CRUCIBLE**. Winner of both the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award and inspired by the McCarthy hearings of the 1950s, the play takes audiences back to a fictionalized account of the Salem, Massachusetts witch trials that took place during the years 1692 and 1693. It is a tale of lies, revenge and mass hysteria as the citizens of Salem turn against each other as gossip becomes fact, lies become truth and innocence becomes guilt. Miller explores how public hysteria combined with fear can destroy people's lives.

This production of **THE CRUCIBLE** 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. Moreover, this production will be in the format of a radio drama, further encouraging the audience to employ the power of their imaginations as they experience Miller's thrilling language. First Stage's Young Company Performance Projects are sponsored by **Children's Wisconsin** and **United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF)**.

THE CRUCIBLE streams **February 19 – March 7, 2021**. Performances will be livestreamed through Broadway On Demand on **February 19 at 7 p.m.**, **February 20 at 7 p.m.** and **February 21 at 3:30 p.m.** A recorded performance will be available to stream following the Sunday, February 21 performance through **Sunday, March 7**. 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 and thirty minutes, including an intermission. Suggested for families and 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.

Young Company Director **Matt Daniels** commented on this next First Stage virtual offering: “THE CRUCIBLE is a classic of the American Theater, and one of my top five favorite plays. Written by Arthur Miller in the middle of the last century during the McCarthy HUAC hearings, it is an examination of power, propaganda and mass delusion, through the lens of the Salem witch trials. Our students will have the opportunities for deep historical research and to dive in to searing and powerful scene work. And as with every great piece of art, they will ask the audience many more questions than they give answers.”

Director **Ann Joseph-Douglas** also shared these thoughts about the play: “My eighth grade English teacher, Mr. Silver, first introduced me to THE CRUCIBLE and it has remained one of my favorite plays. I have always marveled at the brilliance of Arthur Miller to connect the charged political atmosphere of the 1950s and our country’s preoccupation with purging communism from our country to the Salem witch trials. The metaphorical witch-hunt of the McCarthy hearings captivated the country and aided in fanning the flames of conspiracy and mistrust.”

She continued, “As I reflect on this past year, I realize just how relevant the themes of THE CRUCIBLE are and just how fragile our democracy is. As we navigate this era of social media, data mining and political and racial divisions, THE CRUCIBLE reminds us of what we stand to lose if we allow fear to rule our judgment – our humanity.”

BIOGRAPHIES

Ann Joseph-Douglas (Director) has worked as a professional artist, educator and arts administrator in Chicago for the past 20 years. She is a founding ensemble member of Congo Square Theatre Company where she has served as the Director of Education, Director of Development and until 2013 as Executive Director. Ann’s theatrical credits include: THE PIANO LESSON, PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD, FROM THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA, SEVEN GUITARS, WEDDING BAND, ELMINA’S KITCHEN, STICK FLY and DAY OF ABSENCE at Congo Square Theatre Company; I NEVER SANG FOR MY FATHER, TIME OF YOUR LIFE and THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER at Steppenwolf Theatre; LOST BOYS OF THE SUDAN, LIVING GREEN and CLASS DISMISSED at Victory Gardens Theatre; DOUBT at Writers Theatre; A CHRISTMAS CAROL at Goodman Theatre and RADIO GOLF at Court Theatre. Regionally Ann has appeared at American Players Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theater and Madison Repertory Theatre. Film and television credits include: *Chicago Med*, *Chicago PD*, *Early Edition*, *Hunter* and the web series *Totally Becky*. In 2013 Ann accepted a teaching position at Loyola University Chicago. While at

Loyola she served as Arts Infusion Initiative Program Coordinator. The Arts Infusion Initiative was a three-year collaboration between a dedicated cohort of teaching artists from arts organizations throughout the city and Chicago's juvenile justice professionals. It offers high risk teens in high risk settings strategically designed arts instruction infused with communication and conflict resolution skills, all provided by role models of positive life choices. Ann provides specialized professional development training and engagement opportunities for the teaching artists to advance teacher impact with teens. From 2017 – 2019 Ann was Director of Theatre for National High School Institute at Northwestern University.

Matt Daniels (Director of Young Company) is a frequent collaborator and Artistic Associate at First Stage, as an actor (ESCAPE FROM PELIGRO ISLAND, 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 and 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 and 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.

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 CRUCIBLE features First Stage Young Performers: **Sam Bower** (Whitefish Bay) as John Proctor; **Trevor Schmitt-Ernist** (Wauwatosa) as Reverend Parris; **Costello Mylott** (Milwaukee) as Thomas Putnam; **Liam Jeninga** (Delavan) as Giles Corey; **Kate Ketelhohn** (Cedarburg) as Francis Nurse; **Kamani Graham** (Milwaukee) as Reverend Hale; **Zachary Nowacek** (Wauwatosa) as Ezekiel Cheever; **Jonathan Edwards** (Milwaukee) as Marshal Herrick; **Addy Grace** (Milwaukee) as Judge Hathorne; **Madison (Maddie) Uphoff** (Madison) as Deputy Governor Danforth; **Eloise Field** (Oconomowoc) as Abigail Williams; **Madgdalyn Rowley-Lange** (Milwaukee) as Mary Warren; **Jeana Bormett** (Madison) as Betty Parris; **Ella Vitrano** (Greendale) as Susanna Wolcott; **Nora Rommelfanger** (Wauwatosa) as Mercy Lewis; **Daisha Lafford** (Milwaukee) as Tituba; **Elisheva Scheuer** (Bayside) as Elizabeth Proctor;

Selma Rivera (Milwaukee) as Mrs. Ann Putnam; **Molly McVey** (Bayside) as Rebecca Nurse; **Sabrina Borg** (Cedarburg) as Sarah Good and **Emily Treffert** (Glendale) as Stage Directions/Martha Corey.

The Artistic Staff for THE CRUCIBLE features Includes: **Ann Joseph-Douglas** (Director); **Matt Daniels** (Director of Young Company); **Shannon O'Donnell** (Costume Coordinator); **Rick Sims** (Sound Coordinator); **Melissa L. Wanke**, Member of Actors' Equity Association, (Stage Manager) and **Lindy Girman** (Stage Management 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 for the 2020/21 Virtual Season of Plays, please visit: firststage.org/virtualseries2021.

FACT SHEET

About: THE CRUCIBLE

Dates: February 19 – March 7, 2021

Stream it live February 19 at 7 p.m., February 20 at 7 p.m., and February 21 at 3:30 p.m.

Stream the recorded performance through March 7 (recording will be available following the Sunday, February 21 performance).

Description: Inspired by the McCarthy hearings of the 1950s, THE CRUCIBLE takes us back to a fictionalized account of the Salem, Massachusetts witch trials. A tale of lies, revenge and mass hysteria as the citizens of Salem turn against each other as gossip becomes fact, lies become truth and innocence becomes guilt. *Performance runtime is approximately two hours and thirty minutes, including an intermission. Suggested for families and young people ages 13+.*

Performed by First Stage's award-winning Young Company, these Performance Projects are actor-driven presentations 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. This production will also be in the format of a radio drama, further encouraging the audience to employ the power of their imaginations as they experience Miller's thrilling language.

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.