



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **First Stage celebrates the holidays with RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER™: THE MUSICAL**

*-The beloved TV classic soars off the screen and returns to the Todd Wehr this holiday season-*

**Milwaukee, WI – November 9, 2022** – Come celebrate the holidays this year with First Stage and the return of their heartwarming production of **RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER™: THE MUSICAL!**, based on the 1964 television special *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* and stage production directed and conceived by **Jeff Frank** and **First Stage**. The live, musical version of **RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER™** will be directed by Artistic Director **Jeff Frank** and features all the colorful characters audiences know and love, a thrilling adventure story combined with an unforgettable holiday musical score by **Johnny Marks**, including the catchy “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” theme song. From fleeing the Abominable Snow Monster to saving Christmas, join Rudolph and his friends, Hermey the Elf and Yukon Cornelius, as their adventures remind us that what makes us different can also be what makes us special. Don’t miss this wonderful holiday tradition that speaks to the little misfit in all of us! Sponsored by **Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren** and **Associated Bank**.

**RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER™: THE MUSICAL** runs **November 25 – December 24, 2022** at the Marcus Center’s Todd Wehr Theater, located at 929 N. Water Street in downtown Milwaukee. Tickets start at \$32 and can be purchased in person at the Marcus Center Box Office at 929 N. Water Street, by phone at (414) 273-7206 or online at [firststage.org](http://firststage.org).

*Performance runtime is approximately 70 minutes, which includes a brief intermission.*

*Suggested for families with young people ages 4+.*

From Artistic Director/Director **Jeff Frank**: “What fun to return to Christmastown and visit Rudolph and friends once again! Who knew when we launched the premiere production in 2012 that it would serve as the model for subsequent productions – including a national tour! This joyful holiday tale will once again come to life at the Todd Wehr Theater courtesy of some clever staging, the remarkable design work of Brandon Kirkham, and our incredible production department who crafted this piece with such care and detail. Rudolph, Hermey and the Toys remind us all that there is a place for everyone. There really is no such thing as a misfit – just a world that needs to learn to welcome people as they are. No one should have to worry about covering up who they are to seek acceptance. We need to make the effort to move beyond first impressions to take the time to really listen to one another and find a deeper understanding of folks. After all – it turns out that even the Bumble is misunderstood. From the incredible music of Johnny Marks to the adventures with the Bumble, to the lovable inhabitants of the Island of Misfit Toys, to the hilarious antics of Yukon Cornelius, to the heartwarming storytelling of Sam the Snowman – RUDOLPH has something for the entire family to celebrate this holiday season. Come home for the holidays together at First Stage.”

## **BIOGRAPHY**

**Jeff Frank (Director)** Recognized as one of the top directors in the field with an expertise in developing new work for theater for the young audience field, Jeff 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, Jeff remains committed to the power of theater to transform lives and is forever thankful to call First Stage home. Some of his favorite shows include: MATILDA THE MUSICAL, A MIDNIGHT CRY, LUCHADORA and GRETEL! Much love to his wife and children, who provide constant support and inspiration. Thank you for joining us for another season of inspiring and thought-provoking work. We ask you to lean in and discover the magic of theatre while learning more about your community and your world.

## **ADULT CAST**

**Tommy Novak\*** (Sam the Snowman); **Rick Pendzich\*** (Coach Comet/Yukon Cornelius); **J.T. Backes\*** (Boss Elf/Charlie/Ensemble); **David Flores** (Santa Claus); **Karen Estrada\*** (Mrs. Claus/Ensemble); **James Carrington\*** (Donner/Ensemble); **Ashley Oviedo** (Mrs. Donner/Ensemble); **Tim Linn** (Bumble/Moonracer/Ensemble); **Jeff Frank** (Understudy for Tim Linn); **Alayna Perry** (Understudy for Karen Estrada); **Zackary Simonini** (Understudy for Tommy Novak and Rick Pendzich); **Lindsay Gleason** (Understudy for Ashley Oviedo); **Jonathon Gideon** (Understudy for J.T. Backes); and **Aidan C-P Black** (Understudy for James Carrington and David Flores).

\*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 **Gold Cast** include: **Lucia Harris** (Fox Point) as Rudolph; **Abram Nelson** (Whitefish Bay) as Hermey; **Lauren DeGroot** (Menomonee Falls) as Clarice; **Edward Owczarski** (Milwaukee) as Fireball/Ensemble; **Zion Singh Ponder** (Brookfield) as Elf/Ensemble; **Tobias Imes Benischek** (Hartland) as Elf/Aviator Elf; **Julius Newman** (Milwaukee) as Elf/Young Buck; **Cecilia Harris** (Fox Point) as Elf/Ensemble; **Caroline Kanter** (Fox Point) as Elf/Ensemble; **Quinn Sison** (Milwaukee) as Elf; **Eva Dahlberg** (Franklin) as Elf; **Zephaniah Singh Ponder** (Brookfield) as Tall Elf/Ostrich Cowboy/Ensemble; **Ava Gruenewald** (New Berlin) as Dolly/Ensemble; **Annie Sturtz** (Waukesha) as Spotted Elephant/Ensemble; **Adelle Frederick** (Wauwatosa) as Birdfish/Ensemble; **Sydney McElroy** (Milwaukee) as Train/Ensemble; **Beatrix Madson** (West Allis) as Plane/Ensemble and **Ellie Wilhelm** (Hartland) as Young Doe/Ensemble.

Young Performers in the **Silver Cast** include: **Liam Eddy** (Hartland) as Rudolph; **Layton Lal** (Whitefish Bay) as Hermey; **Emily Honigman** (Whitefish Bay) as Clarice; **Paxton Haley** (Milwaukee) as Fireball/Ensemble; **Beckett Patterson** (Glendale) as Elf/Ensemble; **Tiago Patterson** (Glendale) as Elf/Aviator Elf; **Collin Wiese** (Wauwatosa) as Elf/Young Buck; **Taylor Burks** (Franklin) as Elf/Ensemble; **Leah Dietz** (Cedarburg) as Elf/Ensemble; **Silvia Stoeger** (Milwaukee) as Elf; **Abbie Cashman** (Shorewood) as Elf; **Benjamin Nowacek** (Wauwatosa) as Tall Elf/Ostrich Cowboy/Ensemble; **Hazel Dye** (Milwaukee) as Dolly/Ensemble; **Layla Ana Mathias** (Oconomowoc) as Spotted Elephant/Ensemble; **Rita Sturrock** (Milwaukee) as Birdfish/Ensemble; **Marcia Olson** (Milwaukee) as Train/Ensemble; **Giana Ferrara-Schlitz** (Waukesha) as Plane/Ensemble and **Natalie Ward** (Milwaukee) as Young Doe/Ensemble.

The Artistic Staff for **RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER™: THE MUSICAL** includes: **Jeff Frank** (Director); **Raven Dockery** (Music Director); **Ami Majeskie** (Choreographer); **Brandon Kirkham** (Scenic, Costume and Puppet Designer); **Jason Fassl, USA** (Lighting Designer); **Matt Whitmore** (Sound Designer); **Joel Andrew Cote**, Member of Actors' Equity Association, (Stage Manager); **Lauren Westfahl** (Assistant Stage Manager) and **Issac Hopper** (Assistant Stage Manager).

**Tickets start at \$32** – Tickets may be purchased at [firststage.org](https://www.firststage.org) or through the Marcus Center Box Office, in person at 929 N. Water Street in downtown Milwaukee or by phone (414) 273-7206 or toll free at (888) 612-3500. The number for TDD (for deaf and hard of hearing patrons) is (414) 273-3080.

**COVID Protocols:** First Stage is no longer requiring proof of vaccination upon arrival, and masks will be optional in the theater, unless the community level in Milwaukee County is rated in the High category, as determined by the CDC. First Stage COVID safety protocols and updates can be viewed here: [firststage.org/covid-19-safety-protocols/](https://www.firststage.org/covid-19-safety-protocols/) - [performances](#)

**Security at the Marcus Performing Arts Center:** Upon entry to the Todd Wehr Theater, attendees will walk through a security scanner to check for any items not permitted in the building. While purses and small bags are allowed, please leave larger bags, backpacks or other

items at home. [Review Security Procedures at the Marcus Performing Arts Center](#). Please allow ample time for parking and security checks before the performance.

**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/)

**Enrichment Guide:** An Enrichment Guide for the production filled with fun holiday activities can be found here: [firststage.org/media/gqyoylaj/rudolph\\_enrichmentguide.pdf](http://firststage.org/media/gqyoylaj/rudolph_enrichmentguide.pdf)

### **Special events for RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER™: THE MUSICAL**

#### **Pay What You Choose Performance: Thursday, December 1, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.**

Pay What You Choose tickets are available on a first come, first served basis with a minimum suggested donation of \$5 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. For more information, please visit: [firststage.org/events-tickets/tickets-offers/pay-what-you-choose/](http://firststage.org/events-tickets/tickets-offers/pay-what-you-choose/)

#### **Sensory Friendly Performance: Saturday, December 10, 2022 at 3:30 p.m.**

A Sensory Friendly Performance with accommodations for families with children on the autism spectrum will take place on Saturday, December 10 at 3:30 p.m. Sensory accommodations include a quiet area staffed by an experienced educator, lower sound, house lights up 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/](http://firststage.org/plan-your-visit/sensory-friendly-performances/).

#### **Grandparent Holiday Brunch: Sunday, December 11 before the 1:00 p.m. performance of RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER™: THE MUSICAL**

Gather the entire family and join First Stage for a festive holiday brunch before the 1 p.m. performance of [RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER: THE MUSICAL](#) on **Sunday, December 11, 2022**. The brunch will be held at the Marcus Performing Arts Center in the Bradley Pavilion located at 929 N. Water Street. Registration is from 11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. The brunch will begin at 11:30 a.m. Tickets are \$65 for adults and \$45 for children 12 and under, which includes a delicious pancake breakfast buffet, holiday-themed activities and programming for the kids, plus your ticket to the show! Already have tickets for the show, but want to attend the brunch? Tickets are \$50 for adults and \$30 for children 12 and under. To learn more or to register, please visit [Grandparent Holiday Brunch](#).

#### **ASL Interpreted Performance: Sunday, December 18, 2022 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 Todd Wehr Theater. To learn more, please visit: [firststage.org/plan-your-visit/accessibility/sign-language-interpreted-performances/](http://firststage.org/plan-your-visit/accessibility/sign-language-interpreted-performances/)

## **FACT SHEET**

### **About: RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER™: THE MUSICAL**

Based on the animated television special “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” and the stage production directed and conceived by **Jeff Frank** and **First Stage**.

Script adaptation by **Robert Penola**. Arrangements and orchestrations by **Timothy Splain**.

“Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” animated television special adapted from a story by Robert L. May and the song by Johnny Marks, music and lyrics by Johnny Marks. All elements © and ™ under license to Character Arts, LLC.

Directed by **Jeff Frank**

Sponsored by **Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren** and **Associated Bank**

**Location:** Marcus Center’s Todd Wehr Theater, 929 N. Water Street, Milwaukee

**Live Performances: November 25 – December 24, 2022**

**Description:** And if you ever saw it, you would even say it glows! The beloved TV classic *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* soars off the screen and returns to our stage this holiday season. From fleeing the Abominable Snow Monster to saving Christmas, join Rudolph and his friends, Hermey the Elf and Yukon Cornelius, as their adventures teach us that what makes you different can be what makes you special. Don’t miss this wonderful holiday tradition that speaks to the little misfit in all of us. *Performance runtime is approximately 70 minutes, which includes a brief intermission. Suggested for families with young people ages 4+.*

### **Performances:**

- Friday, November 25 at 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m. – *OPENING PERFORMANCES*
- Saturday, November 26 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, November 27 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Thursday, December 1 at 7:00 p.m. – *PAY WHAT YOU CHOOSE PERFORMANCE*
- Saturday, December 3 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, December 4 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Thursday, December 8 at 7:00 p.m.
- Friday, December 9 at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, December 10 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *SENSORY FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE AT 3:30 P.M.*
- Sunday, December 11 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *GRANDPARENT HOLIDAY BRUNCH BEFORE 1:00 P.M. PERFORMANCE*
- Wednesday, December 14 at 7:00 p.m.

- Thursday, December 15 at 7:00 p.m.
- Friday, December 16 at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, December 17 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, December 18 at 1:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. – *ASL PERFORMANCE AT 3:30 P.M.*
- Wednesday, December 21 at 7:00 p.m.
- Thursday, December 22 at 7:00 p.m.
- Friday, December 23 at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, December 24 at 1:00 p.m.

For more information, please visit [firststage.org](http://firststage.org) or call (414) 267-2961.

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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 ensures that all programming is not only accessible to its community but that it is reflective of the community it serves.

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 young people on the autism spectrum and with other developmental disabilities. 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 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)