



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First Stage's award-winning Young Company presents
AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

-A searing examination of the intersection of politics and the public good-

Milwaukee, WI – April 9, 2024 – First Stage's Young Company, the Theater Academy's award-winning training program for advanced high school actors, will present its final production of the 2023/24 season, Henry Miller's brilliant adaptation of Ibsen's AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE. The production will be directed by Milwaukee theater artist, educator and Co-Founder/Producing Artistic Director of Vanguard Productions **Joshua "JP" Pohja**. In this timely play we explore what happens when one man's quest to do right is seemingly at odds with the best interests of his community. Can reason and science win out over rumor and fear? When Dr. Stockmann makes a literally poisonous discovery, his brother, the Mayor, begins a war of innuendo and half-truths that threatens to tear their family – and their community – apart. Sponsored by **United Performing Arts Fund**.

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE runs **April 19 – 28, 2024** 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 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.*

Director Joshua "JP" Pohja had this to share about the production: "I am grateful to Jeff Frank and Matt Daniels for the opportunity to collaborate once more with the remarkable talents of Young Company. As a director my approach resonates harmoniously with the ethos of Young Company, prioritizing minimalism and textual integrity. Our shared dedication to these principles fosters a profound synergy, enabling us to delve into the intricacies of character motivation and physical expression. In our upcoming production of AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE,

we embark on a journey to craft a modernist, true-to-life interpretation that delves into the essence of Ibsen's profound thesis. Through the expressive and disciplined capabilities of our young adult cast, we aim to dissect and illuminate the timeless themes encapsulated within this classic work."

Added **Matt Daniels**, former Director of Young Company: "There may be no finer adaptation of Ibsen's searing examination of the intersection of politics and the public good than American master, Arthur Miller's. This play has questions that we still have trouble answering more than a century after Ibsen first asked them. Looked at through the eyes of the next generation as represented by Young Company, they become even more urgent."

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 (Former Director of Young Company) is a frequent collaborator at First Stage, as an actor (THE LIGHTNING THIEF: The Percy Jackson Musical, THE HOBBIT, A WRINKLE IN TIME, BIG RIVER, 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 Young Company, where he has taught and directed (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, 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

Joshua "JP" Pohja (Director) (he/him/jp) is a theater creator, educator and Co-Founder and Producing Artistic Director of Vanguard Productions. JP teaches and directs locally, most recently helping Vanguard's annual production of ALL IS CALM: THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF 1914 and ANTIGONE at The Calvary. For Young Company he has directed THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH (2017) and ANTIGONE (2016). Most recently he directed HAMLET for First Stage's Company Class as well as BLUE STOCKINGS, MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING and JULIUS CAESAR previously. Pohja co-produced and co-directed Milwaukee Chamber Theatre's 2023

Young Playwright's Festival and served five years as Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Education Programs Coordinator. Pohja has performed nationally with, most notably, The Guthrie Theater, Acting Company, Old Globe, NYC Fringe Festival, Alley Theatre, Judson Church and HERE Arts Center. He is a graduate of the Carnegie Mellon School of Drama (BFA Acting) during the tenure of the Moscow Art Theatre and alumni of the Saratoga International Theatre Institute (SITI) at Skidmore College under the guidance of Anne Bogart and the SITI Company. Visit joshpohja.com.

Cast

The Young Company cast for AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE includes: **John Eash-Scott** (Wauwatosa) as Dr. Thomas Stockmann; **William Kastner** (Oconomowoc) as Mayor Peter Stockmann; **Maya Thomure** (Whitefish Bay) as Mrs. Catherine Stockmann; **Reiley Fitzsimmons** (Fox Point) as Petra; **Elena Marking** (Franklin) as Hovstad; **Madison Jones** (Milwaukee) as Aslaksen; **Mara Holzen** (Wauwatosa) as Billing; **Sophia Bernhardt** (Greendale) as Captain Horster; **Thatcher Jacobs** (Fox Point) as Morten Kill, The Drunk; **Lila Lester** (Milwaukee) as Morten/Edvard and **Thomas Bastardo** (St. Francis) as Understudy (various roles).

Artistic and Creative Team

The Artistic & Creative Team for AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE includes: **Matt Daniels** (Former Director of Young Company); **Joshua "JP" Pohja** (Director); **Marion Frank** (Assistant Director/Sound Coordinator); **Michelle Verbos** (Costume Coordinator); **Shane O'Neil** (Lighting Coordinator) 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/

Please note: Please refer to the digital playbill for updates on any cast changes as well as for the appropriate pronouns for actors.

Enrichment Guide: An Enrichment Guide for the production can be found here: firststage.org/media/qccdtqo2/enemy_enrichmentguide.pdf

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

Special event for AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

Pay What You Choose Performance: Friday, April 26, 2024 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/

FACT SHEET

What: First Stage’s Young Company presents: AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

By **Arthur Miller**, adapted from Henrik Ibsen’s play

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE (Miller) is presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service collection. dramatists.com

Directed by **Joshua “JP” Pohja (Director)**

Former 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

Performances: April 19 – 28, 2024

Description: What happens when one man’s quest to do right is seemingly at odds with the best interests of his community? Can reason and science win out over rumor and fear? When Dr. Stockmann makes a literally poisonous discovery, his brother, the Mayor, begins a war of innuendo and half-truths that threatens to tear their family – and their community – apart. *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, April 19 at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, April 20 at 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, April 21 at 3:30 p.m.
- Friday, April 26 at 7:00 p.m. – *PAY WHAT YOU CHOOSE PERFORMANCE*
- Saturday, April 27 at 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, April 28 at 3:30 p.m.

Ticket and information: Tickets are \$15. Call (414) 267-2961 or online at: 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

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/