



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**First Stage's award-winning Young Company
presents**

LITTLE WOMEN

-Sparkling adaptation of classic novel comes to Milwaukee Youth Arts Center this spring-

Milwaukee, WI – March 8, 2023 – First Stage's Young Company will present **LITTLE WOMEN**, a modern-retelling of the classic novel by award-winning, contemporary playwright **Kate Hamill**, adapted from the novel by **Louisa May Alcott**. "Kate Hamill has made a name for herself by writing ingeniously wrought stage versions of popular 19th-century novels that treat their source material with mischievous freedom," commented *The Wall Street Journal's* Terry Teachout. The play is directed by popular Milwaukee actor, director and First Stage alum **Karen Estrada**, recently seen on stage in First Stage's charming production **CARMELA FULL OF WISHES**. This fresh adaptation of the beloved book centers around the women of the March family. Jo March isn't your typical Victorian lady. She's ruthless and headstrong, and destined to be a great American novelist. As Jo and her sisters grow up in the middle of the Civil War, they strive to be brave, intelligent and imaginative young women, while reconciling their own ambitions with society's expectations. Alcott's celebrated coming-of-age novel comes to stage in this modern and relevant adaptation. Sponsored by **United Performing Arts Fund**.

LITTLE WOMEN runs **March 24 – April 2, 2023** 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 \$15. Tickets 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 families with young people ages 12+.*

From Director of the Young Company Matt Daniels: “Kate Hamill’s adaptation of this essential American story manages to be startlingly modern even as it explores a long-gone era. This play is about whip-smart, resilient, sparkling young women looking to make their mark on a world that may not be ready for them. Sounds like an ideal match for YC’s excellent performers! This version of the story is intimate, beautiful and surprising, just as Alcott’s novel is to anyone who picks it up for the first time.”

Added **Director Karen Estrada:** “Everyone identifies with a character in *Little Women*. Those who love the story can endlessly debate character choices and events from the book; furthering that with spirited discussion regarding which of the many, many adaptations best capture these classic scenes. Fans of Alcott’s *Little Women* have done so across all the years, languages and cultures that have access to the story. They sympathize because the March sisters and their friends’ coming-of-age story elements are both familiar and beautifully composed; they are learning how they identify as young adults and doing so while balancing their place in the wider world, within their family dynamic and against their own ambitions. Their stories are funny and heartbreaking and confusing and poignant. These actors (and to some extent all of us) are in that place too – learning who they are and who they want to be in the wide world. The story is immediate and timeless, intimate yet funny and absolutely lovely.”

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 First Stage’s 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

Kate Hamill (Playwright) is an actor/playwright. *Wall Street Journal’s* Playwright of the Year, 2017. Her work includes her play SENSE AND SENSIBILITY (in which she originated the role of Marianne) – Winner, Off-Broadway Alliance Award 2016; Nominee, Drama League Award; 265+ performances Off-Broadway. Other plays include VANITY FAIR at the Pearl Theatre (in which she originated the role of Becky Sharp; Nominee, Off-Broadway Alliance Award 2017), PRIDE AND PREJUDICE at Primary Stages and Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival (originated the role of Lizzy Bennet; Nominee, Off-Broadway Alliance Award). Her plays have been produced Off-Broadway at A.R.T., Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Guthrie, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Dallas Theater Center, PlayMaker’s Rep, Folger Theatre (eight Helen Hayes Award nominations; Winner, best production – S&S), Arvada Center and others; upcoming productions at Shakespeare Theatre of DC, A.C.T., Trinity Repertory Theatre, Portland Center Stage, Syracuse Stage, Pittsburgh Public, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Dorset Theatre Festival and more. Upcoming world premieres: LITTLE WOMEN at the Jungle Theater and Primary Stages; MANSFIELD PARK at Northlight Theatre. kate-hamill.com

Karen Estrada (Director) is an actor, director and theater educator living in Milwaukee and has had the good fortune to appear in over a dozen productions at First Stage. She has also had the

pleasure of working with Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Next Act Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, Skylight Music Theatre, Milwaukee Opera Theatre and is a three-time alumna of the Disney on Classic tour of Japan and Taiwan. Karen is proud to have directed pieces for Renaissance's Brinks Briefs, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre's Young Playwright Festival, Marquette University, Forward Theater's 2021 Monologue Festival and First Stage's world premiere of ON THE WINGS OF A MARIPOSA.

Matt Daniels (Director of the Young Company) is a frequent collaborator at First Stage, as an actor (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 the Young Company, where he teaches and directs (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, (recently seen as Scrooge in The Rep's annual production of A CHRISTMAS CAROL), 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

The Young Company cast for LITTLE WOMEN includes: The Young Company cast for LITTLE WOMEN includes: **Alice Rivera** (Milwaukee) as Marmee; **Gabriela Bastardo** (Saint Francis) as Beth; **Josie Van Slyke** (Milwaukee) as Jo; **Katya Ravie** (Milwaukee) as Hannah/Aunt March/Parrot; **Lio Landis** (Milwaukee) as Mr. Laurence/Mr. March/Man; **Lola Onorato** (Milwaukee) as Meg; **Max Larson** (Milwaukee) as Laurie; **Paxton Haley** (Milwaukee) as Amy; **Thomas Bastardo** (Saint Francis) as Brooks; **Elena Marking** (Franklin) as Mr. Dashwood/The Messenger and Understudy for Jo/Meg and **Natalie Ottman** (Milwaukee) as Mrs. Mingott and Understudy for Amy/Beth/Hannah.

The Artistic & Creative Team for LITTLE WOMEN includes: **Karen Estrada** (Director); **Matt Daniels** (Director of the Young Company); **Christopher Elst** (Fight and Intimacy Director); **Shane O'Neil** (Lighting Coordinator); **Michelle Verbos** (Costume Coordinator); **Marion Frank** (Sound Coordinator) and **Carrie Johns** (Stage Manager).

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

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/plan-your-visit/safety-security/ - performances](https://firststage.org/plan-your-visit/safety-security/-performances)

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/uzwb425z/littlewomen_enrichmentguide.pdf

Special event for LITTLE WOMEN

Pay What You Choose Performance: Friday, March 31 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. To learn more visit: firststage.org/events-tickets/tickets-offers/pay-what-you-choose/

FACT SHEET

What: First Stage's Young Company presents: LITTLE WOMEN

By **Kate Hamill**

Adapted from the novel by **Louisa May Alcott**

Directed by **Karen Estrada**

Director of the Young Company **Matt Daniels**

Sponsored by **United Performing Arts Fund**

Location: Goodman Mainstage Hall, Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, 325 W. Walnut Street, Milwaukee

Live Performances: March 24 – April 2, 2023

Description: Jo March isn't your typical Victorian lady. She's ruthless and headstrong, and destined to be a great American novelist. As Jo and her sisters grow up in the middle of the Civil War, they strive to be brave, intelligent and imaginative young women, while reconciling their

own ambitions with society's expectations. Alcott's celebrated coming-of-age novel comes to stage in this modern and relevant adaptation. *Performance runtime is approximately two hours and 15 minutes with a brief intermission. Suggested for families with young people ages 12+.*

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Performances:

- Friday, March 24 at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, March 25 at 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, March 26 at 3:30 p.m.
- Friday, March 31 at 7:00 p.m. – *PAY WHAT YOU CHOOSE PERFORMANCE*
- Saturday, April 1 at 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, April 2 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 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

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/