



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Contacts:**

Cindy Moran, PR Consultant, [cmoran@firststage.org](mailto:cmoran@firststage.org), (414) 405-6290

Jennifer Hubbartt, Director of Marketing and Communications, [jhubbartt@firststage.org](mailto:jhubbartt@firststage.org),  
(414) 267-2932

**First Stage proudly presents the  
world premiere production  
THE GRACIOUS SISTERS**

*-First Stage's award-winning Young Company will explore themes of revenge and justice  
in thrilling, modern adaptation of a Greek play-*

**Milwaukee, WI – April 11, 2023** – The final production in First Stage's 2022/23 season will be THE GRACIOUS SISTERS, freely adapted from Aeschylus' *The Eumenides* by noted playwright/filmmaker and First Stage Resident Playwright **Alice Austen**. Austen's play GIRLS IN THE BOAT premiered at First Stage in 2018 and has since gone on to having productions across the country. Popular Milwaukee/First Stage actor (THE HOBBIT) and Director of the Young Company **Matt Daniels** will direct this world premiere production. When archaeological intern Alice falls down an ancient Greek rabbit hole, she discovers the aftermath of a violent murder, with the goddesses of vengeance, or "Furies," chasing down the accused to exact bloody retribution. Athena, the goddess of wisdom (and war), persuades the Furies that the accused should have a fair trial before a jury. When the jury is divided in a split decision, all must come to terms with the balance of a desire for vengeance and the need for grace. THE GRACIOUS SISTERS is part of **World Premiere Wisconsin**, a statewide festival celebrating new plays and musicals. Sponsored by **United Performing Arts Fund**.

THE GRACIOUS SISTERS runs **May 5 – May 21, 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](http://firststage.org) or through the First Stage Box Office at **(414) 267-2961**. *Performance runtime is approximately 90 minutes with no intermission. Suggested for families with young people ages 13+.*

**From Director Matt Daniels:** “I love ancient Greek plays almost as much as I love Shakespeare, so the opportunity to partner with one of First Stage’s playwrights in residence to bring one of these pieces into our modern age was too good to pass up. After her amazing work on *GIRLS IN THE BOAT*, I knew Alice Austen was the ultimate fit for creating a play for our young people that highlights their unique blend of curiosity and determinism. Especially as we all traverse this incredibly unstable era of modern history.”

This is a Young Company production, showcasing the work of First Stage’s award-winning advanced high-school actors. Produced in the intimate Goodman Mainstage Hall, the connection of actor to audience is enhanced and the words of the play come alive in exciting ways as these young artists apply their graduate level skills to this piece, commissioned specially for them.

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

**Alice Austen (Playwright)** is a First Stage Resident Playwright. Theatrical Credits include *GIRLS IN THE BOAT* (World Premiere at First Stage in 2018) and *ANIMAL FARM* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company), *FOUL* (Theatre 503 London/Subverse), *WATER* (Chicago Dramatist) and her adaptation and translation of Duras’ *LA MUSICA* (Timeout Critic’s pick). Austen has received Residencies and Commissions from the Royal Court (London), the Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company and Chicago Dramatists. Austen’s work has been honored as a Terrence McNally Award Premiere Five Finalist, Eugene O’Neill Semi-Finalist, Women at the Door Winner, Joseph Jefferson Award Nominee for Best New Work, Blue Ink Award Finalist and on Kilroy’s “The List.” A graduate of Harvard University, where she studied law and creative writing, Austen is a recipient of the 2020 John Cassavetes Award for *Give Me Liberty*, the critically acclaimed feature film she produced and wrote, with Kirill Mikhanovsky, that premiered at Sundance and Cannes, was a *New York Times* Critic’s Pick and on the *LA Times*, *Washington Post*, *National Board of Review* and *Hollywood Reporter’s* lists of Top Films of 2019. [givemelibertymfg.com](http://givemelibertymfg.com)

**Matt Daniels (Director/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 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](http://mattdanielsonline.com)

The Young Company cast for THE GRACIOUS SISTERS includes: **Silver Anderson** (Milwaukee) as Tisiphone; **Elena Marking** (Franklin) as Clytemnestra; **Reiley Fitzsimmons** (Fox Point) as Pythia; **Angel Rivera** (Milwaukee) as Alice; **Terynn Erby-Walker** (Milwaukee) as Athena/Hermes; **Hazel Dye** (Milwaukee) as Fury (Megaera); **Rose Campbell** (Whitefish Bay) as Fury (Alecto); **John Eash-Scott** (Wauwatosa) as Orestes; **Zachary Nowacek** (Wauwatosa) as Apollo; **Lio Landis** (Milwaukee) as Understudy for Orestes; **Enzo Litz** (Milwaukee) as Understudy for Apollo; **Gabriela Bastardo** (Saint Francis) as Swing Understudy and **Mara Holzen** (Wauwatosa) as Swing Understudy.

The Artistic & Creative Team for **THE GRACIOUS SISTERS** includes: **Matt Daniels** (Director/Director of the Young Company); **Leo Madson** (Assistant to the Director), **Madelyn Yee** (Scenic Designer); **Derek Buckles** (Sound Designer); **Marion Frank** (Lighting Designer); **Lyndsey Kuhlmann** (Costume Designer); **Carrie Johns** (Stage Manager) and **Isaac Hopper** (Assistant Stage Manager).

**Tickets are \$15** – Tickets may be purchased at [firststage.org](http://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](http://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/](http://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.

### **Special event for THE GRACIOUS SISTERS**

#### **Pay What You Choose Performance: Friday, May 12 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/](http://firststage.org/events-tickets/tickets-offers/pay-what-you-choose/)

## **FACT SHEET**

**What:** First Stage's Young Company presents: THE GRACIOUS SISTERS

By **Alice Austen**

A free adaptation of *The Eumenides*, by Aeschylus

Directed by **Matt Daniels**

Director of the Young Company **Matt Daniels**

Sponsored by **United Performing Arts Fund**

This play is part of World Premiere Wisconsin, a statewide festival celebrating new plays and musicals. [worldpremierewisconsin.com](http://worldpremierewisconsin.com)

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

**Live Performances: May 5 – May 21, 2023**

**Description:** When archaeological intern Alice falls down an ancient Greek rabbit hole, she discovers the aftermath of a violent murder, with the goddesses of vengeance, or “Furies,” chasing down the accused to exact bloody retribution. Athena, the goddess of wisdom (and war), persuades the Furies that the accused should have a fair trial before a jury. When the jury is divided in a split decision, all must come to terms with the balance of a desire for vengeance, and the need for grace. *Performance runtime is approximately 90 minutes with no intermission. Suggested for families with young people ages 13+.*

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**Performances:**

- Friday, May 5 at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, May 6 at 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, May 7 at 3:30 p.m.
- Friday, May 12 at 7:00 p.m. – *PAY WHAT YOU CHOOSE PERFORMANCE*
- Saturday, May 13 at 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, May 14 at 3:30 p.m.
- Friday, May 19 at 7:00 p.m.

- Saturday, May 20 at 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, May 21 at 3:30 p.m.

**Ticket and information:** Tickets are \$15. Call (414) 267-2961 or online at: [firststage.org](http://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](http://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/](http://firststage.org/theater-academy/young-company/)

