



NEWS RELEASE

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STAGES PERFORMING ARTS ACADEMY CELEBRATES SUCCESSSES AND INTRODUCES NEW PROGRAMMING FOR 2015-16 YEAR

(ST. LOUIS) – STAGES St. Louis is thrilled to report that the STAGES Performing Arts Academy experienced exceptional growth in its programming during its 2015 year and will introduce exciting new classes and programs beginning this Fall for the 2015-16 school year at the state-of-the-art Kent Center for Theatre Arts in Chesterfield. The Academy, which opened its doors in March 2004, now celebrates its twelfth year of delivering St. Louis the finest classes in the Musical Theatre disciplines of voice, dance, and drama.

This past year marked the first-annual Academy production, SHREK Jr. Developed as a way for enrolled Academy students to supplement their artistic education with experience performing in a full-length musical, this inaugural production featured a cast of 38 students and sold out five performances. Following its success, this coming November the Academy will produce ANNIE Jr., which welcomes the irrepressible comic strip heroine to the center stage in one of the world's most loved musicals. With plenty of parts to go around for both kids and teens, students are guaranteed to have an amazing time!

Outreach programs continue to flourish, now reaching a record-breaking number of 4,000 students which are fostered by over 50 school and community partnerships. This year, STAGES received first-time funding from Wells Fargo Advisors that provides scholarships for students to participate in Academy performance groups and programming. The Employee Community Fund of Boeing also awarded STAGES a grant to support its Access the Arts programming. Since 2005, STAGES' Access the Arts programming has provided classes, workshops, and performance opportunities enabling children with physical, cognitive, and developmental challenges, including Down syndrome, visual impairments, and autism, to participate fully in the musical theatre arts. Access the Arts is the only program of its kind in the St. Louis region and currently serves more than 350 students annually.

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In 2015, STAGES' premiere performance groups, Triple Threats and TeamSTAGES enjoyed special performance opportunities at Ballpark Village, Mainstreet Disney in Orlando, Florida, the Sheldon Concert Hall, and on *Great Day St. Louis*. Due to the growing interest in these programs and the number of students aging out of the current program structure, STAGES has developed a separate group for student performers grades 9-12 at the advanced level who wish to prepare for and pursue a collegiate and/or professional career in musical theatre. This new addition to Academy programming, called Triple Threats TEENS, will build on the current teams' successes and provide up to 15 students with an opportunity to travel and perform throughout the year as ambassadors for the Academy. This group also will put on a full-scale production of INTO THE WOODS in December 2015.

The support of the Fox Performing Arts Charitable Foundation has played an integral part in the Academy's growth. In partnership, the Academy has been able to introduce a new Musical Theatre Workshop and comprehensive Master Class series. This year's amazing new offerings, which include MATILDA THE MUSICAL (October 21 – November 1, 2015) and Disney's NEWSIES (January 19 – 31, 2016), will expose students to professional Broadway actors, directors, and choreographers, providing the opportunity to further perfect their skills and gain invaluable knowledge and training from some of the brightest stars on Broadway and in Regional Theatre.

STAGES St. Louis is the region's foremost not-for-profit company committed to preserving and advancing the art form of Musical Theatre through excellence in performance and education. In 2015, STAGES celebrates its 29th year of producing Broadway-quality theatre, presenting 144 performances from May through October to nearly 50,000 patrons, during its mainstage season.

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