



**World
Premiere
Wisconsin**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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World Premiere Wisconsin

Inaugural statewide theater festival
celebrating new plays and musicals runs

March 1 – June 30, 2023

-Festival features nearly 50 participating theaters premiering new works throughout Wisconsin-

Madison, Milwaukee, and Fish Creek – February 21, 2023 – Four years in the making, after extensive planning and collaboration amongst a team of noted Wisconsin theater professionals, **World Premiere Wisconsin (WPW)** is proud to announce its inaugural festival comes to Wisconsin this spring. The theater festival will run **March 1 – June 30, 2023** throughout the state – from the tip of Door County to the state line and across 20 distinct zip codes. The new works created for World Premiere Wisconsin by nearly 50 participating theaters will explore, illuminate, and celebrate the vastness of Wisconsin’s story, culture, and the many people who make up this great state. The comprehensive WPW line-up boldly says: “this is Wisconsin, and as theater makers and patrons, we take great pride in that.” **World Premiere Wisconsin is Proudly Presented by Ten Chimneys Foundation.**

Additional sponsors include: Community Sponsors **United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF)**, **Destination Door County**, **Full Compass Systems**, and **Milwaukee Magazine**, Spotlight Sponsor

Destination Madison and **VISIT Milwaukee**, Media Sponsor: **Isthmus**, and In-Kind Support: **Distillery**.

Great theater and the development of new plays are not new to Wisconsin – there is a long history of such work in this state. However, WPW now provides a platform for Wisconsin to be recognized for its exceptional work and contributions to American theater with this first-of-its-kind collaboration – both statewide and nationally.

When asked why she thought a theater festival like this was needed now, **WPW Founder Jen Uphoff Gray** commented: “World Premiere Wisconsin was born out of my desire to celebrate the incredible theater makers in our state. I hoped that bringing us all together towards a common purpose could build new relationships, attract attention (both statewide and around the country) for our work, and generate enthusiasm for the exciting new plays and musicals being created here. We are already seeing these goals come to fruition, and I could not be prouder of what we have already accomplished together.

“Theatergoers will have an extraordinary opportunity this spring to be the first to see scores of new works without having to travel far and to know that by showing up, they are contributing to the creation of this art. Live audiences are a crucial ingredient in the development of plays and musicals, and Wisconsin’s audiences will help us launch all these stories out into the world!”

WPW Festival Producer Michael Cotey added: “WPW is a big, bold idea not just for Wisconsin but for all theaters. Theaters across the country are struggling. By taking such a big swing with this festival, we hope to set an example of what’s possible in the spirit of collaboration and inspire others with the work we’ve done to rally theaters together in their state. But we’ll still be able to say we did it first, and as someone born and raised in Wisconsin, I’m very proud of that.”

Festival Highlights

New World Premiere Website

WPW has launched a new website with a complete listing of all productions, readings, workshops, and more. Audience members can search the website’s calendar, filter, and explore categories like region, genre, or “Local Brew,” which features pieces by Wisconsin playwrights. Visitors can also sign up for the WPW newsletter and Digital Passport. Visit the new site here: worldpremierewisconsin.com

Digital Passport

WPW is also excited to offer a free mobile-exclusive digital passport that allows visitors and locals to check-in at participating festival theaters, redeem promotional offers, and earn points along the way, which can be redeemed for rewards. WPW partnered with the technology

company **Bandwango**, based in Salt Lake City, Utah, to launch this passport. Their team has successfully launched many gamified check-in trails with destinations in the U.S. and Canada. The pass is free, and once audience members sign-up, it is immediately sent to their phone and email; no downloads are required. Those who sign up and follow WPW on Facebook and Instagram will be entered into sweepstakes and giveaway opportunities exclusive to passport holders. To learn more: worldpremierewisconsin.com/passport/

Awarded Wisconsin Department of Tourism Grant

In December, World Premiere Wisconsin was awarded the Wisconsin Department of Tourism's **Joint Effort Marketing (JEM)** grant at its full amount of \$39,550, which will increase the festival's ability to reach more people across the state through print and online media.

WORLD PREMIERE WISCONSIN 2023 FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

Festival Theater Productions:

At the core of WPW are 248 performances across 11 full productions by Wisconsin's leading professional theaters in three regions (Madison, Milwaukee, Door County), including...

MILWAUKEE

- [THE HEART SELLERS](#) by Lloyd Suh at *Milwaukee Repertory Theater*, February 7 – March 19, 2023
- [HOOPS](#) by Eliana Pipes with original music by B-Free adapted from the Hoops Portrait Project by Nicole Acosta at *Milwaukee Chamber Theatre*, March 10 – April 2, 2023
- [TIDY](#) by Kristin Idaszak at *Renaissance Theaterworks*, March 24 – April 16, 2023
- [THE GRACIOUS SISTERS](#) by Alice Austen at *First Stage*, May 5 – 21, 2023
- [GOD'S SPIES](#) by Bill Cain at *Next Act Theatre*, April 27 – May 21, 2023
- TBA at [Skylight Music Theatre](#), May 19 – June 11, 2023

MADISON

- [SHINING IN MISERY: A KING-SIZED PARODY](#) book by Colleen DuVall, music by Andrew Abrams, and lyrics by Mark-Eugene Garcia at *Capital City Theatre*, February 23 – March 5, 2023
- [ARTEMISIA](#) by Lauren Gunderson at *Forward Theater Company*, April 13 – 30, 2023

DOOR COUNTY

- [I CARRY YOUR HEART WITH ME](#) by Jennifer Blackmer at *Third Avenue Playworks*, May 10 – 29, 2023.
- [A ROCK SAILS BY](#) by Sean Grennan, at *Peninsula Players*, June 13 – July 2, 2023.

- [THE FISH WHISPERER](#) book by Scott Guy and Robin Share, music by Dan Wessels and Ron Barnette at *Northern Sky Theater*, June 14 – August 25, 2023.

World Premiere Wisconsin will also unfold throughout the state thanks to 40 additional professional, community, and academic theater companies staging full productions, readings, and workshops of new work in more than 20 communities.

Current lineup of all productions:

- worldpremierewisconsin.com/all-shows/

Current full festival participant list:

- worldpremierewisconsin.com/participants/

WPW Festival Schedule

Please refer to the website for additions and any updates to the full WPW festival schedule. Listings are subject to change. For specific production updates, please refer to the producing theater's website for the most up-to-date information, including runtimes and how to purchase tickets.

Reviewer tickets

Please contact the individual theaters to request reviewer/media tickets and to inquire about their comp ticket policies and procedures.

Visual assets

For WPW logos, headshots, and other visual assets, please go to:
worldpremierewisconsin.com/media-kit/

Questions

There's a wealth of information on the new World Premiere Wisconsin website (worldpremierewisconsin.com), especially on its Frequently Asked Questions page (worldpremierewisconsin.com/faq/). For general festival questions, please contact Festival Producer Michael Cotey at worldpremierewi@gmail.com. For media inquiries, please contact PR Consultant Cindy Moran at cindy@bluehills.net.

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World Premiere Wisconsin

World Premiere Wisconsin (WPW) is an inaugural statewide festival celebrating new plays and musicals from March 1 – June 30, 2023, presented by the Ten Chimneys Foundation. Spearheaded by the leadership of Forward Theater Company of Madison, Milwaukee Repertory

Theater, and Northern Sky Theater of Door County, WPW was conceived with four primary goals in mind: to build relationships between Wisconsin theater makers, to raise national awareness about Wisconsin's thriving and diverse theater ecosystem, to encourage the production of new work, and to communicate a positive story about theater making in Wisconsin during this critical phase of recovery and rebuilding. From the tip of Door County to the state line, WPW is a bold idea, locally brewed with pride right here in our great state. For more information, visit: worldpremierewisconsin.com

PRESENTING SPONSOR

Ten Chimneys Foundation

Ten Chimneys is the estate lovingly created by Broadway legends Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. Tours of Ten Chimneys not only celebrate the one-of-a-kind collection the Lunts amassed during their lifetimes, but also honor the values found in every corner of the Lunts' lives, both on the stage and in the house they called home for more than half a century. For decades, Ten Chimneys was a beacon to the theater community. Ten Chimneys Foundation has resumed a historic role as an important place for artistic creation, discussion, and leadership and is dedicated to being an inspirational resource for American theater. Among our programs is the groundbreaking national Lunt-Fontanne Fellowship Program, where regional theater actors across the country are invited to participate in a weeklong Master Class and retreat with a nationally renowned Master Teacher. This program does not exist simply to serve actors but to strengthen the ability of actors and theaters to enrich people's lives as artists, mentors, teachers, and leaders in their communities. tenchimneys.org

LEAD PRODUCING THEATERS

Forward Theater Company

Forward Theater Company is the resident professional theater company at Overture Center for the Arts in Madison, Wisconsin. Specializing in contemporary plays, Forward was founded on a commitment to the cultural fabric of the Madison community, and works to provide locally produced, exceptional theater experiences for area audiences and to give Wisconsin's professional actors, designers, and directors an artistic home. The company is committed to the civic life of Madison, and partners with many nonprofit organizations to bring exciting, engaging, and challenging theater experiences to the community. forwardtheater.com

Milwaukee Repertory Theater

Milwaukee Rep is the largest performing arts organization in Wisconsin with three unique performance venues in the Associated Bank Theater Center – the Quadracci Powerhouse, Stiemke Studio, and Stackner Cabaret. For over six decades, Milwaukee Rep has been a centerpiece of Milwaukee's vibrant arts and cultural scene with productions ranging from Broadway musicals to Shakespeare to American Classics and New Works that are entertaining, inclusive and impactful. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Mark Clements and Executive Director Chad Bauman, Milwaukee Repertory Theater ignites positive change in the cultural,

social, and economic vitality of its community by creating world-class theater experiences that entertain, provoke, and inspire meaningful dialogue among an audience representative of Milwaukee's rich diversity. milwaukeeerep.com

Northern Sky Theater

Northern Sky is a must-see Door County theater experience: original musicals presented beneath stars and towering pines in Peninsula Park Amphitheater, as well as indoors at the intimate, state-of-the-art Gould Theater. No matter the venue, Northern Sky is "a Door County tradition...one of the most exceptional professional troupes in the country" (Chicago Tribune). northernskytheater.com

BIOGRAPHIES

Jennifer Uphoff Gray (Founder) (she/her/hers) is the founding artistic director of Forward Theater Company. Jen dreamed up World Premiere Wisconsin in September 2018 and has spent the last four-plus years advocating and organizing to turn the dream into a reality. In Wisconsin, she has directed for Madison Rep and Milwaukee Shakespeare. She directed the National Tour of *Copenhagen*, and was Associate Director on Broadway of *Copenhagen*, *Cabaret*, *The Blue Room* (starring Nicole Kidman), and *The Life*. Off-Broadway directing credits include the world premiere of *Suburb* at the York Theatre Company. Jen grew up in the Madison area, holds a degree in Dramatic Literature & Stage History from Harvard College, and is the proud parent (alongside husband Peter) of Jamie, Seeger, and Arden.

Michael Cotey (Festival Producer) (he/him/his) is a producer and director based out of Chicago but was born and raised in South Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is the creator and artistic producer behind ENOUGH! Plays to End Gun Violence, a nationwide playwriting initiative that calls on teens to write short plays that confront gun violence. Now in its third year, ENOUGH! has received nearly 300 plays, unfolded in over 100 communities, and has been featured on PBS NewsHour, NPR, and the BBC. In addition to directing regionally, Michael has directed in Wisconsin at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Next Act, First Stage, Third Avenue PlayWorks, UW-Madison, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. From 2009 – 2013 he was the Founding Artistic Director of Youngblood Theatre in Milwaukee, regularly celebrated by the theater community and the press as one of the most exciting new Milwaukee theater ventures in decades. Michael graduated from UW-Milwaukee with a BFA in Acting and from Northwestern University with an MFA in Directing. In 2014 he was named UWM's "Graduate of the Last Decade."

View the entire World Premiere Wisconsin leadership team here:

worldpremierewisconsin.com/leadership/