

Talents Come Back Home

New Theater opens on Thursday, Sept. 18 in Tysons area.

By Andrew Johnson, The Connection

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First Stage, a professional theater in Tysons Corner area in McLean, opens with its first show this Thursday, Sept. 18. Its founders say a new theater is looking to accomplish several goals when it opens this week, many of which they hope to be the firsts. The name of the theater has a double meaning: not only is it going to be the first independent professional theater in the county, but it will also serve as a welcoming platform for many of the emerging actors.

With the other professional theaters in the county Wolf Trap Center for the Performing Arts and Theatre of the First Amendment each supported by the National Park Service and George Mason University, respectively, the First Stage is the first one that is independent, meaning that it runs and supports itself.

DESPITE THE "PROFESSIONAL" label, this theater could not have more of a community ambiance. Founded by former Marshall High School teacher Mark Krikstan, who is now the director, along with several former Marshall students, who now serve as the actors, First Stage was their way of supplying a "necessary art component" to the area.

Krikstan also said First Stage presents actors an opportunity to put their abilities on display for their hometown. "Since graduating high school, all of them went off to continue to study theatre throughout the country and didn't really have any way to show their community their talent," said Krikstan. "With First Stage, it's a way of bringing all of this talent back home."

From designing the set to making the logistical decisions to settling on the theater's philosophy, every member has an equal voice in the process. The sense of camaraderie exists not only because of the group's past with each other, but because the mutual enthusiasm, discipline, and trust in what they're striving to accomplish. The cast credits their experience with Krikstan, Krikstan praises the cast's brilliance.

FIRST STAGE'S first production will be Russian playwright Nicolai Erdman's unconventional comedy, "The Suicide." Banned by Stalin before it was ever even presented because of its anticommunist tone, "The Suicide" tells the story of Semyon, a failed tuba player, whose contemplations to shoot himself are selfishly encouraged by those in his boarding home. Each having a self-seeking motive, the characters cover a range of walks of life that portray 1930s Moscow.



Photos by Andrew Johnson/The Connection

A new professional theater, First Stage, opens with "The Suicide" on Thursday, Sept. 18. Pictured during the recent rehearsal, from left, are David Winkler (Vienna), Lucas Beck (Falls Church), Elif Uncu (Falls Church) and Peter Van Valkenburgh (Vienna).



Photos by Andrew Johnson/The Connection

Elif Uncu (Falls Church), David Winkler (Vienna), Peter Van Valkenburgh (Vienna), and Lucas Beck (Falls Church).

The selection of the play fit what they were looking for in establishing themselves as a cultural hotspot in the Tysons Corner area. Opening on Thursday, Sept. 18 at 8 p.m., "The Suicide" will run for four weeks.

With a lightheartedness and good humor that can only come from familiarity with each other, Krikstan and the cast describe how despite all the stressful and difficult phases of forming their own theatre company it is similar to witnessing a birth of a baby: the struggle will be soon forgotten once they finally see it come to life.

First Stage is located on 1524 Spring Hill Road in McLean. For more information on this and future shows, visit the First Stage Web site at www.1ststagespringhill.org