

***The BFG* Makes 'Giant' Leap to The National Theatre This July**

Bethesda Premiere Takes the Stage in Washington, DC July 14-25 for National Audience

BETHESDA, MD (June 2, 2015) Imagination Stage is delighted to release the production details for ***The BFG*** (*Big Friendly Giant*), which will be the inaugural production of **The National Children's Theatre**, performed at The National Theatre in the heart of Washington, DC this July. Following the broadcast of the **Helen Hayes Awards** nominations, in which ***The BFG*** received 11 nominations, the most-nominated Hayes production, Imagination Stage received two awards this April for **Outstanding Production, Theatre for Young Audiences** and **Outstanding Set Design**.

The BFG (best for ages 5+) premiered at Imagination Stage in Bethesda, MD in Summer 2014, and will be presented July 14-25, 2015. Tickets start at \$12 and can be purchased online at www.thenationaldc.org, at The National Theatre box office, or via phone at 1-800-514-3849. Group rates are available by calling 301-280-1664. Press Night for ***The BFG*** will be held on July 17 at 7:30 p.m. To RSVP for you and a guest, please email press@imaginationstage.org.

Based on the book by **Roald Dahl**, adapted by **David Wood**, and co-directed by Imagination Stage's Associate Artistic Director **Kathryn Chase Bryer** and **Eric J. Van Wyk** of Viterbo University, ***The BFG*** integrates puppetry, rich visuals, and imaginative storytelling as Sophie and the Big Friendly Giant embark on a magical journey to save the children of England.

"We are honored to embark on such a meaningful alliance with a creative partner like Imagination Stage," said The National Theatre Executive Director **Sarah Bartlo**. "We have been serving the children of the District for over 35 years with our Saturday Morning at the National program, but this partnership and the award-winning production of ***The BFG*** allows us to bring a broader and more diverse audience to our beautiful venue. What better place for world-class children's theatre than Pennsylvania Avenue?"

The National Theatre received the **DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities Innovate DC grant** for \$100,000 for the upcoming alliance between Imagination Stage and The National Theatre: **The National Children's Theatre**. This grant reflects the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of DC's arts, humanities, and cultural sectors. Read the DCCA's official press release [here](#).

“We are delighted to inaugurate The National Children’s Theatre and our partnership with The National Theatre with the production of *The BFG*,” said **Bonnie Fogel**, Executive Director of Imagination Stage. “Bringing this show to DC, which won two Helen Hayes Awards and received 11 nominations this year, represents another milestone in Imagination Stage’s and The National Theatre’s historic journeys, and has been made possible by extraordinary support from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities Innovate DC grant, as well as inaugural support from The Clark Winchcole Foundation, PEPCO, Exelon, FedEx, and others.”

**THE NATIONAL CHILDREN’S THEATRE:
AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN IMAGINATION STAGE AND THE NATIONAL THEATRE**

Jay Adams and **Genny McSweeney Ryan**, Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of The National Theatre, announced a new alliance between Imagination Stage and The National Theatre at Imagination Stage’s Annual Gala in October 2014:

“We look forward to expanding our reach and welcoming DC school children, families, and tourists to The National Theatre for professional theatre productions at family-friendly prices—or in the case of DC school children, for free,” said **McSweeney Ryan**. The partnership begins next year when Imagination Stage will bring at least one professional production to The National Theatre.

ABOUT THE BFG

The BFG is the world’s *only* friendly giant. He operates in the strictest of secrecy to bring good dreams to the human world, while his nasty counterparts steal and have the despicable habit of eating children. Upon meeting little orphan Sophie through her window, he whisks her away to his home in Giant Country. Together they embark on an adventure to Buckingham Palace to get help from the Queen and save the children from the other giants!

James Konicek, will reprise his role of the BFG after receiving a nomination for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Play at the 2015 Helen Hayes Awards for this role. James was last seen as Captain Hook in the 2013 production of *Peter Pan and Wendy*, for which he received a Helen Hayes Award nomination.

Susan Lynskey, who received a 2015 Helen Hayes Awards nomination for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Play for *The BFG*, will again play the Queen of England and was previously seen at Imagination Stage in the regional premiere of *Lost and Foundling*.

Another familiar Imagination Stage face, **Megan Graves** will return to *The BFG* in the leading role of Sophie, who forms an unlikely friendship with the BFG. Megan is a frequent friend of Imagination Stage, having last performed in the Early Childhood production of *Inside Out* and the Helen Hayes Award-nominated production of *The Magic Finger*. Her other Imagination Stage credits include *The Night Fairy*, *James and the Giant Peach*, and *Dr. Dolittle*.

Maggie Erwin joins the cast in the role of Mary. Maggie has performed at Imagination Stage in *Aquarium*, and has been seen previously at Round House Theatre, Adventure Theatre MTC, and The Hub Theatre.

The remaining ensemble members include *The BFG* and Imagination Stage alum **Matthew McGee** (*James and the Giant Peach* and *The Magic Finger*) who received a 2015 Helen Hayes Awards nomination for The James MacArthur Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Play for *The BFG*, **Matthew Schleigh** (*Wiley and the Hairy Man*, *Lyle the Crocodile*, *James and the Giant Peach*, *The Magic Finger*), **Maboud Ebrahimzadeh**, and **Jon Hudson Odom**. Joining the

cast is **Tyler Herman** (*101 Dalmatians, Wake Up, Brother Bear, Perseus Bayou*), **Vaughn Irving** (*Wiley and the Hairy Man, 101 Dalmatians, Lulu and the Brontosaurus*), and **Joseph Carlson** and **Tony Strowd**, who make their Imagination Stage debut.

The creative team for *The BFG*, led by co-directors **Kathryn Chase Bryer** and **Eric J. Van Wyk**, includes Lighting Designer **Jason Arnold**, Sound Designer **Christopher Baine**, Costume Designer **Jeffrey Stolz**, and Movement Consultant **Ben Cunis**.

The Helen Hayes Awards nominations for *The BFG* include: The James MacArthur Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Play (**Matthew McGee**), Outstanding Lead Actress in a Play (**Susan Lynskey**), The Robert Prosky Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Play (**James Konicek**), Outstanding Sound Design (**Christopher Baine**), Outstanding Lighting Design (**Jason Arnold** [lighting designer] and **Eric J. Van Wyk** [projection designer]), Outstanding Costume Design (**Jeffrey Stolz**), Outstanding Set Design (**Eric J. Van Wyk**), Outstanding Choreography in a Play (**Ben Cunis**), Outstanding Director of a Play (**Kathryn Chase Bryer** and **Eric J. Van Wyk**), **Outstanding Ensemble in a Play**, and **Outstanding Production, Theatre for Young Audiences**.

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ABOUT IMAGINATION STAGE

Founded in 1979, Imagination Stage is a 501(c)(3) organization with a mission to inspire creativity through theatre and arts education programs that nurture, challenge, and empower young people of all abilities. It offers year-round professional theatre for young audiences and classes in creative drama/acting, musical theatre, dance, and filmmaking for ages 1-18. Learn more at www.imaginationstage.org.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL THEATRE

For almost 200 years, Washington's historic National Theatre has occupied a prominent position on Pennsylvania Avenue – "America's Main Street". Located a stone's throw from the White House and bordering the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site, The National Theatre is the historic cultural center for the performing arts in our nation's capital and the oldest enterprise on Pennsylvania Avenue continuously operating in its original designated capacity. Learn more at www.thenationaldc.org.

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