



## Milwaukee Public Theatre News Release

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### Wisconsin's Civilian Conservation Corps Gets Back to Work on Stage

#### *Musical Theatre Work Celebrates Legacy of 1930's Public Works Program*

Smitty and Geezer return to Wisconsin as they sing, joke and tell stories in the original musical comedy ***Camp We-Kan-Tak-It***, an original theatre piece honoring the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Work Projects (Progress) Administration (WPA). Many of the tour venues are in State Parks or sites associated with the CCC or WPA.

"*We Can Take It*" was the national slogan for the CCC, one of the well-known "alphabet soup" of public works programs created by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. From 1933 to 1942, the CCC provided three million jobs to young men, brought relief to their families, and helped conserve America's natural resources.

That historic era and "Can Do" attitude of Wisconsin's own CCC camps are brought to life in ***Camp We-Kan-Tak-It***. Created by Milwaukee Public Theatre and Voices Theater, the multi-media show will tour state-wide from May to September to raise awareness and stimulate discussion about the enduring legacy of Wisconsin's early "stimulus package"—the CCC and WPA. The production is a recipient of a 2010 Humanities Council Major Grant.

The play unfolds as two enrollees, Smitty and Geezer, at Camp We-Kan-Tak-It prepare songs and sketches for the camp's Entertainment Night. They share their experiences about the Great Depression, express gratitude for the CCC wages helping their families, and add the good-natured pranks and humor found in everyday camp life. The camp songs, such as "CCC Wizard Oil," "Debate a Skunk," "Three Cheers for F.D.R." and "Hunt the Snipe," entertain while offering an historical perspective for comparison with the hard times facing America today.

Based on Wisconsin CCC camp newspapers, the show incorporates original photos, drawings, songs, and stories from the 1930's, bringing to life what many young men faced during the Depression and emphasizing the positive environmental effects of the project. Pre-show introductions and post-show discussions with historians and humanists will provide opportunities to reflect on how this experience relates to contemporary environmental concerns and past public works programs. Audiences may also discover a hidden legacy of family members who served in the CCC or WPA but never shared their stories.

The project celebrates the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wisconsin CCC's state park development, begun in November, 1935, and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the WPA, turned into law on April 8, 1935. Extensive resource guides for both projects, *The Humdinger* and *Fireside Chatter*, have been developed for audiences to use.

More information is available by contacting Milwaukee Public Theatre at 414-347-1684, [barbara@milwaukeepublictheatre.org](mailto:barbara@milwaukeepublictheatre.org) or [www.milwaukeepublictheatre.org](http://www.milwaukeepublictheatre.org).

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Milwaukee Public Theatre is a member of the United Performing Arts Fund and receives ongoing support from Milwaukee Arts Board, Milwaukee County CAMPAC, National Endowment for the Arts, Wisconsin Arts Board, corporations, foundations, families and individuals.

**Camp We-Kan-Tak-It** is a collaboration of Rogers Keene, Mary Schueller, Barbara Leigh, David Peterson, Jim Pekol and Patrick Porten, and is co-directed by Rogers Keene and Patrick Porten. Milwaukee Public Theatre is a professional not-for-profit touring company that increases awareness of current social issues, promotes cultural diversity and provides healing arts resources. Voices Theater is a non-profit, grassroots community-based theatre of human relations, which writes and produces original drama on issues of social concerns.

The project is partially funded through grants from the Wisconsin Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Wisconsin Humanities Council supports public programs that engage the people of Wisconsin in the exploration of human cultures, ideas and values. Additional support comes from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation Abert Fund, the Wisconsin Arts Board with funding from the State of Wisconsin, the National Endowment for the Arts, Milwaukee County CAMPAC and the United Performing Arts Fund. The performance in Milwaukee is co-sponsored by the Milwaukee Housing Authority.

### **Camp We-Kan-Tak-It: Making Wisconsin Home Statewide Tour**

**Saturday, May 29; 2:00 PM**

**UW-Arboretum**

1207 Seminole Hwy, Madison, WI  
608-263-7888

Play admission: Donations requested.

**Saturday, June 19; 7:30 PM**

**Devil's Lake State Park Outdoor Theater**

(Weather Permitting, Cancelled if Rain)

S5975 Park Road, Baraboo, WI  
608-356-8301

Play admission: Donations requested. Wisconsin State Park Sticker required. Daily Sticker: \$7 Wisconsin residents; \$10 Non-residents. National Park Service passes accepted.

**Saturday, July 17; 10:00 AM**

**Wisconsin Interstate State Park**

Ice Age Center Auditorium, State Hwy. 35, St. Croix Falls, WI  
715-483-1382

Play admission: Donations requested; Wisconsin State Park Sticker required. Daily Sticker: \$7 Wisconsin residents; \$10 Non-residents. National Park Service passes accepted.

**Saturday, July 17; 3:30 PM**

**St. Croix Festival Theatre**

210 N. Washington Street, St. Croix Falls, WI  
715-483-1382

Play admission: Adults, students and senior citizens: \$5; children 17 and younger: \$3.

**Thursday, July 22; 12:15 PM Performance**

**1:15 PM Panel Discussion**

**Washington Park Senior Center**

4420 W. Vliet St, Milwaukee, WI  
414-933-2332

Play admission: Donations requested.

Bus tour of WPA/CCC Milwaukee sites, details TBD. See [www.milwaukeepublictheatre.org](http://www.milwaukeepublictheatre.org) 414-347-1685

**Saturday, August 28; 7:30 PM**

**Devil's Lake State Park Outdoor Theater**

(Weather Permitting, Cancelled if Rain)

S5975 Park Road, Baraboo, WI  
608-356-8301

Play admission: Donations requested. Wisconsin State Park Sticker required. Daily Sticker: \$7 Wisconsin residents; \$10 Non-residents. National Park Service passes accepted.

**Saturday, September 4; 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM**

**Sunday, September 5; 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM**

**Old World Wisconsin**

S103 W37890 Hwy. 67, P.O. Box 69, Eagle, WI  
Caldwell Farmers' Club Hall inside main entrance  
262-594-6300

Play admission: Adults, students and senior citizens: \$5; children 17 and younger: \$3

(does not include admission to the Museum).

Museum admission: adults \$16; children (5-17) \$9; children under 5 free; students and senior citizens (65 and over) \$14; family (two adults and two or more dependent children 5-17) \$43. Fees include an all-day tram pass.