Orlando Family Stage Marks Its 100th Year with a World Premiere of 'The Best Halloween Ever'

Barbara Robinson's Herdmans reach the stage for the first time, October 10 through November 1



Playwrights Jahnna Beecham (left) and Skye Hillgartner, the mother-daughter writing team behind the world premiere of The Best Halloween Ever at Orlando Family Stage.

ORLANDO, FL, UNITED STATES, September 30, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- In its 100th year, Orlando Family Stage opens the world premiere of The Best Halloween Ever, a new stage adaptation of Barbara Robinson's beloved novel written by Jahnna Beecham and Skye Hillgartner and directed by Dimitri Vogt Toscas. Public performances run October 10 through November 1, 2026, with the production making its worldwide debut in Orlando before becoming available to theatres nationwide through Concord Theatricals.

Founded in 1926 as the Orlando Little Players, Orlando Family Stage has spent a century doing exactly this: taking a chance on new work, developing it in partnership with playwrights, and sending it out into the world. What began as a small community theatre company has grown into one of the nation's largest professional theatres for young audiences, with productions that have reached stages across the United States. The Best Halloween Ever is the latest in that lineage, developed here in Central Florida before it belongs to the country.

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>
> *Jeff Revels, Artistic Director of Orlando Family Stage.*

"Our Centennial is about investing in the next hundred years of stories," said Jeff Revels, Artistic Director of Orlando Family Stage. "The Best Halloween Ever is exactly the kind of work we exist to create: a play that starts here, with our community, and then travels the country. When Jahnna first

proposed it, my reply was simple: you write it and I will produce it. We are very proud of what this team has built."


The cast of The Best Halloween Ever in rehearsal at Orlando Family Stage.

The Herdmans are back. Brought to life onstage for the first time, Robinson's famously terrible (and secretly big-hearted) family takes on Halloween in a story full of mischief, candy, costumes, and schoolyard chaos. The production marks the latest chapter in a long creative relationship between Beecham and the Herdman family: her musical adaptation of The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, co-written with Malcolm Hillgartner, has seen nearly 300 productions since its 2016 premiere at Children's Theatre of Charlotte.

The play was developed in close partnership with Orlando Family Stage, including a developmental reading at the inaugural Florida Children's Book Festival in February 2026, an event hosted by the theatre and attended by thousands of Central Florida families. Co-written by Skye Hillgartner, Beecham's daughter and collaborator, the play was shaped through workshops with Artistic Director Jeff Revels, director Dimitri Vogt Toscas, and a company of Orlando Family Stage performers.

For a theatre celebrating 100 years of empowering young people through live performance, commissioning and premiering original work is not a milestone event. It is the mission. Since its founding, Orlando Family Stage has partnered with playwrights, composers, and directors to create theatre that speaks to young audiences honestly and without condescension. That commitment is woven into every part of the organization, from its Youth Academy training the next generation of performers, to its arts-based learning programs in schools across Central Florida, to its partnership with the UCF MFA in Theatre for Young Audiences, one of the nation's leading graduate programs in the field. The Best Halloween Ever opens in the theatre's 100th year as proof of what that century of investment looks like in practice.

- Field trip performances: October 5-30, 2026
- Public performances: October 10 - November 1, 2026
- Venue: Orlando Family Stage, 1001 E. Princeton Street, Orlando, FL 32803
- Book Tickets Here: OrlandoFamilyStage.com or (407) 896-7365

Check dates for an ASL-interpreted, Audio Described, or Relaxed Performance option. Visit OrlandoFamilyStage.com/accessibility for the full schedule.

ABOUT ORLANDO FAMILY STAGE

Orlando Family Stage empowers young people to be brave and empathetic by creating quality theatrical experiences. Founded in 1926 and based in Loch Haven Park at 1001 E. Princeton Street, Orlando, FL 32803, the organization is one of the nation's largest professional theatres for young audiences, serving Central Florida through professional productions, arts-based learning, and youth education. A professional theatre in partnership with the UCF MFA in Theatre for Young Audiences, Orlando Family Stage develops new work that reaches theatres across the United States.

ABOUT JAHNNA BEECHAM AND SKYE HILLGARTNER

Jahnna Beecham is a playwright and author whose stage adaptation of The Best Christmas Pageant Ever (co-written with Malcolm Hillgartner) has had nearly 300 productions since 2016. Skye Hillgartner is Beecham's daughter and co-author, whose previous collaboration with Beecham includes The Baby-Sitters Club 40th Anniversary Fan Edition: Baby-Sitters Summer (released July 7, 2026). The Best Halloween Ever is published and licensed through Concord Theatricals.

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