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## **It's a Divine Musical Like Nun Other! Broadway's Natalie Toro to Star as Mother Superior in The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre's *Sister Act*: Complete Casting Announced**

***March 14 – April 5, 2020***

*Music by Alan Menken*

*Lyrics by Glenn Slater*

*Book by Cheri and Bill Steinkellner*

*Directed and Choreographed by Lisa Shriver*

(Wednesday, February 12, 2020—SEATTLE) Complete casting has been announced for **The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre's** new production of ***Sister Act***, which begins rehearsals today. Joining the cast as Mother Superior is the acclaimed Broadway star **Natalie Toro**, who is known for her performances in *A Bronx Tale* (Madame Defarge, original cast), *Les Misérables* (*Eponine*), and *Cats* (Grizabella). Toro joins the previously announced 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre favorites **Lisa Estridge** (*Mamma Mia!*; *Into the Woods*; *Company*) as Deloris Van Cartier, **Taylor Niemeyer** (*West Side Story*, *A Chorus Line*) as Mary Robert, **Sarah Russell** (*Kiss Me, Kate*; *Urinetown*) as Mary Patrick, **Brandon O'Neill** (*Urinetown*; *Rock of Ages*) as Curtis Jackson, and **Nathaniel Tenenbaum** (*Urinetown*, *Annie*) as Eddie Souther.

The cast also features **Carol Swarbrick** as Mary Lazarus, **Jason Kappus** as Joey, **Rico Lastrapes** as Pablo, **Alex Nicholson** as TJ, and **Brace Evans** as Monsignor O'Hara. The ensemble includes **Andi Alhadeff**, **Kristin Burch**, **Sarah Rose Davis**, **Candice Donehoo**, **Alexandria Henderson**, **Cristin Hubbard**, **Ellen McLain**, **Trina Mills**, **Shaunyce Omar**, **Richard Peacock**, **Jordan Iosua Taylor**, and **Tia Petersen** (swing).

"*Sister Act* is pure joy – and this stellar cast is going to make it a party of a time," said **Bill Berry**, The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre's Producing Artistic Director. "I'm so excited to have Lisa Estridge back on our stage playing her dream role. More than anything, this musical is an experience that can brighten the darkest of winter blues in the way only The 5<sup>th</sup> can do."

*Sister Act* features direction and choreography by **Lisa Shriver**, who returns to The 5<sup>th</sup> after choreographing this season's world premiere production of *Austen's Pride* and directing and choreographing last season's Gregory Award-winning smash hit *Rock of Ages*.

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Playing **March 14 – April 5, 2020** (press opening Friday, March 20, 2020), single tickets for *Sister Act* are on sale now at [www.5thavenue.org](http://www.5thavenue.org), by phone at **206.625.1900**, or in person at the **Box Office** at 1308 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Downtown Seattle.

When disco diva Deloris Van Cartier witnesses a murder, she is put in protective custody in the one place the cops are sure she will not be found: a convent! Using her unique disco moves and singing talent to inspire the choir, Deloris breathes new life into the church and community. *Sister Act* is the feel-good musical comedy sensation based on the hit 1992 film that features original music by eight-time Oscar winner Alan Menken. This uplifting musical was nominated for five Tony Awards® including Best Musical.

### **About the Cast**

**Natalie Toro** makes her 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre debut as Mother Superior. Her Broadway credits include *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Les Misérables*, and *A Christmas Carol*. She has performed in national tours of *Evita*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Cats*, and *In The Heights*. She was in the Off-Broadway productions of *The Yellow Brick Road*, *Zombie Prom*, and *The Audience* and has performed regionally in productions of *Benny & Joon*, *Snow Child*, *The Bikinis*, *Zorba*, *Blood Brothers*, *Frances of Guernica*, *Everything's Ducky*, and *The Fix*. Her television credits include *Law and Order: SVU*, *Elementary*, *Person of Interest*, *Black Box*, and PBS, and she can be seen in the new film adaptation of *West Side Story*, directed by Steven Spielberg (release date December 2020). Toro has been a soloist at Carnegie Hall, a headliner for major cruise lines, and is a recording artist.

**Lisa Estridge** returns to The 5<sup>th</sup> as Deloris Van Cartier. She was last seen at The 5<sup>th</sup> as Tanya in *Mamma Mia!* Her other 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre credits include *Into The Woods*, *Company*, *Buddy*, *Signin' in the Rain*, *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, *Hair*, and *Most Happy Fella*. Estridge now resides in Chicago, but Seattle will always be her theater home. She is a proud UW PATP graduate.

**Taylor Niemeyer** joins the cast as Mary Robert. Previous 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre credits include *West Side Story*; *Annie*; *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*; *Kiss Me, Kate*; *Romy and Michele's High School Reunion*; *The Little Mermaid*; *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*; *A Chorus Line* (Bebe); and *The Music Man* (Zaneeta).

**Sarah Russell** returns to The 5<sup>th</sup> as Mary Patrick. Past credits at The 5<sup>th</sup> include *Urinetown* (co-production with ACT); *Kiss Me, Kate*; *Grease*; and *RENT*. Her regional theatre credits include *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *The Noteworthy Life of Howard Barnes*, *Dreamgirls*, and *My Heart is the Drum* at Village Theatre; *Big Fish* at Taproot Theatre Company; *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* at Seattle Children's Theatre; and *The Little Engine That Could* at Storybrook Theater.

**Brandon O'Neill** returns to The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre stage as Curtis Jackson. Select 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre credits include *Rock of Ages*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Carousel*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *RENT*, and *Guys and Dolls*. His Broadway credits include *Aladdin* (Original Broadway Cast, Voice of Cave of Wonders worldwide) and *A Bronx Tale* (first replacement). Select regional credits include *Dracula*, *Oslo*, *Pride & Prejudice*, *A View from the Bridge*, *Assassins*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Beatsville*, *Beatrice and Benedict*, *Sondheim at the Pops*. O'Neill was a 2018 ACT Theatre Core Company member.

**Nathaniel Tenenbaum** joins the cast as Eddie Souther. His previous 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre credits include *Annie* and *Urinetown* (co-production with ACT). His regional credits include *Indecent* at Seattle Repertory Theatre and *Dreamgirls* at Village Theatre.

**Carol Swarbrick** returns to The 5<sup>th</sup> as Mary Lazarus. Her previous credits at The 5<sup>th</sup> include *Sweeney Todd* (Mrs. Lovett), *Mame* (Vera Charles), and *White Christmas* (Martha Watson). She has performed on Broadway in *42<sup>nd</sup> Street*, a revival of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, *Side By Side By Sondheim*, and the revival of *Whoopie!* Her focus of late has been the one-woman play, *Lillian Carter - A Life Of Some Significance* about Jimmy Carter's mother, the basis of the upcoming docudrama, *Miss Lillian*.

**Jason Kappus** joins the cast as Joey. His previous 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre credits include *Rock of Ages*, *West Side Story*, and *Catch Me if You Can*. He was seen on Broadway in *American Idiot* and toured nationally in *Jersey Boys* and *Legally Blonde*. His other Seattle theatre credits include *Shout Sister Shout* (Seattle Rep); *Hairspray* and *Million Dollar Quartet* (Village Theatre); and *High School Musical* and *Wizard of Oz* (Seattle Children's Theatre). Kappus will portray Glen Guglia in *The Wedding Singer* at Village Theatre this summer.

**Alex Nicholson** makes his 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre debut as TJ. His Off-Broadway credits include *Vanity Fair*, *The Mutilated*, and *The Taming of The Shrew* and his regional credits include *In The Heights* and *Ragtime*. National Tour: *We The People*. Nicholson is a Circle in the Square graduate.

**Rico Lastrapes** returns to The 5<sup>th</sup> as Pablo, having been last seen in *West Side Story* in 2019. Lastrapes received his BFA in Acting from the University of Central Florida. His regional credits include *Newsies*, *In the Heights*, *ELF the Musical*, *Godspell*, *Last Stop on Market Street*, and *Peter and the Starcatcher*.

**Brace Evans** makes his debut at The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre as Monsignor O'Hara. He is an alumni of Garfield High School, University of Washington, Brooklyn College, Freehold Theatre, and Royal Academy of Dramatic Art: Acting Shakespeare. He has performed regionally with Seattle Repertory Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, Intiman, Sound Theatre, Washington Ensemble Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, and Book-It Repertory Theatre. His film credits include *Fall City* and *Headless Into Night*.

The ensemble includes **Andi Alhadeff**, **Kristin Burch**, **Sarah Rose Davis**, **Candice Donehoo**, **Alexandria Henderson**, **Cristin Hubbard**, **Ellen McLain**, **Trina Mills**, **Shaunyce Omar**, **Richard Peacock**, **Jordan Iosua Taylor**, and **Tia Petersen** (swing).

#### **About the Director and Choreographer**

**Lisa Shriver** returns to The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue after directing and choreographing *Rock of Ages* and choreographing this season's *Austen's Pride*. Her Broadway credits include *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *The Farnsworth Invention*, *The Story of My Life*, and *Ring of Fire*. As Assistant Choreographer (selected) she has worked on *Into the Woods* w/Vanessa Williams, *The Producers*, and *Titanic*. Off-Broadway credits include *Into the Woods* (Lucille Lortel Nomination for Outstanding Choreography), *Yellow Face* (The Public), and *Fetch Clay Make Man* (NYTW) and her regional credits include Stratford Shakespeare Festival (*Caesar and Cleopatra*, *The Tempest*, both with Christopher Plummer), *The Scottish Play*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Her film credits include *A Beautiful Mind*, *Hysterical Blindness* (HBO), and Disney's *A Christmas Carol* with Jim Carrey (Director: Robert Zemeckis). Assistant Choreographer work includes *The Polar Express*, *Mixed Nuts* w/Steve Martin, and *Center Stage*. Her work has been seen on TV in *A Very Murray Christmas* with Bill Murray (Director: Sofia Coppola), *Broad City*, and *The Detour*. Other work includes Phish's New Year's Eve concert at Madison Square Garden, Busch Gardens, and Disney Cruise Line.

#### **About the Music Director**

**Tim Symons** returns to The 5<sup>th</sup> with *Sister Act*. His previous 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre credits include *Rock of Ages*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Romy and Michele's High School Reunion*, and *Assassins* (ACT/The 5<sup>th</sup>). Other credits include *Spelling Bee*, *Hart Island*, *Matilda*, *Into the Woods*, *Billy Elliot*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *The Who's Tommy* at Village Theatre and *Man of La Mancha* and *Xanadu* at Arizona Theatre Company. Symons recently composed original scores for *Corduroy* at Seattle Children's Theatre and *As You Like It* at Seattle Shakespeare Company. Symons is the resident music director at Village Theatre, and also composes and performs with Seattle jazz trio Fawcett Symons & Fogg.

### **About the Creative Team**

*Sister Act* showcases scenic design by **Adam Koch**, costume design by **Cathy Hunt**, lighting design by **Alex Berry**, sound design by **Walter Trarbach**, and hair and wig design by **Mary Pyanowski Jones**.

Additional staff includes **Graham Keen** (associate director and choreographer), **Trina Mills** (assistant choreographer), **R.J. Tancioco** (associate music director), **Devin Petersen** (scenic coordinator), **Michael Notestine** (assistant costume designer), **Thorn Michales** (associate lighting design), **Haley Parcher** (associate sound design), **Cathan Bordyn** (fight coach), **JR Welden** (production stage manager), **Rachel Bury** and **Rachael Dorman** (assistant stage managers), and **Claire Stark** (production assistant).

### **FOR CALENDAR EDITORS**

**WHEN:**            *Previews begin Saturday, March 14, 2020*  
Opening Night: Friday, March 20, 2020 (press night)  
Closing Performance: Sunday, April 5, 2020  
Tuesdays – Thursdays at 7:30pm  
Fridays at 8:00pm  
Saturdays at 2:00pm and 8:00pm  
Sundays at 1:30pm and 7:00pm (no 7:00pm performance April 5)

**WHERE:**        The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre (1308 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Downtown Seattle)

**TICKETS:**      Please visit [www.5thavenue.org](http://www.5thavenue.org) or call the Box Office at 206.625.1900 for tickets (starting at \$29). Groups of 10 or more call 1.888.625.1418.

### **About The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre**

The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre is one of America's leading musical theater companies. We enrich the community we love with the art form we love—giving the Pacific Northwest a front-row seat to original powerhouse productions that go on to light up marquees and audiences all the way to Broadway. From the page to the stage, we bring passion and epic scale to every musical we create. With big talent. Bigger-than-life productions. And did we mention dazzle? As a nonprofit theater company and our region's largest performing arts employer, we spread the joy of great musicals with people of all ages across our region and state. Each year, we reach 75,000 young people through our nationally acclaimed education programs. Programs designed to develop new musicals ensure that the next generation of great musicals will be there to tell the stories that captivate tomorrow's audiences. On the national stage, we are a leading voice for the power of this American art form to lift the human spirit.

For more information about The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre, its season and its programs, please visit [www.5thavenue.org](http://www.5thavenue.org).

Special thanks to *Sister Act* contributing sponsor City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture and restaurant sponsor Hard Rock Café. Additional thanks to 2019/20 season sponsors ArtsFund, U.S. Bank, and Alaska Airlines.

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