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10th Annual 5th Avenue Awards Honoring High School Musical Theater Announces Nominees

*Excitement Builds as Previous Participants Return to The 5th to Recognize the Next Generation of Musical Theater Stars
Sponsored by Wells Fargo
June 4, 2012, at The 5th Avenue Theatre*

(Tuesday May 15, 2011 SEATTLE, WA) – The 5th Avenue Awards Honoring High School Musical Theatre celebrates its tenth anniversary with a bang this year, bringing previous recipients back to the stage to present the next generation of musical theater stars with awards and accolades. The acclaimed program, sponsored by Wells Fargo, is a high school version of the Tony Awards, and allows theater students from across Washington to meet, celebrate, and honor the exceptional musical theater productions presented during the 2011-12 school year. The 5th Avenue Awards will be held at **7:00 PM, Monday, June 4, at The 5th Avenue Theatre.**

The power of participating in the arts is profound and has a lasting impact on young participants. Created by 5th Avenue Theatre Producing Director Bill Berry a decade ago, The 5th Avenue Awards shine the spotlight on high school musical theater programs and offer theater students the kind of support and recognition that accomplished high school athletes have received for decades. Over the last ten years, many schools have reported back to The 5th Avenue that their involvement in this awards program has significantly helped their individual efforts to secure funding, improve curriculum, and increase student participation.

Since its inception, the program has grown in size and scope, from 24 productions and 3100 students in 2003 to 93 productions and over 9,000 students participating this year. For the 2011-12 high school theater season, 191 nominations and 99 honorable mentions were given to the 93 productions in various categories. Over the past 10 years, evaluators have traveled to schools across the state of Washington, from large schools in urban districts, to those in smaller rural communities, and the mission has always been the same: to honor the work, talent and commitment that students, parents and faculty devote to their school's yearly musical productions.

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Each year, schools from across Washington State apply their musicals for consideration by The 5th Avenue Awards Committee. Evaluators selected by The 5th travel across the state to cities as far away as Spokane, Lynden, Sequim and Vancouver, seeking the best actors and actresses, directors and designers to represent their schools in the hotly anticipated annual event. During the past school year, The 5th Avenue Theatre sent teams of theater professionals to evaluate each school's production. Nominations are made in 21 categories, from "Lobby Display" to "Overall Musical Production."

Nominated students and schools will perform excerpts from their shows and get a taste of what it's like to perform in front of a packed house. An estimated 2,100 high school students are expected to attend, along with their families and friends.

As The 5th approaches this milestone, it looks back on the years with pride and amazement at how the program has grown and at how many of the past participants have gone on to have fruitful careers both on stage and behind the scenes. Numerous past participants of the 5th Avenue Awards have gone on to have notable careers as actors, directors, designers and theater administrators. Several participants have had careers outside of Seattle and have enjoyed national acclaim. Stefano Langone was a recent top 10 contestant on the hit television show *American Idol* and Ryah Nixon appeared in the national tour of *9 to 5: the Musical*. Brandon Ivie recently directed the 5th Avenue's acclaimed production of *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella*, and was the Assistant to the Writers on the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning musical *Next to Normal* and Dramaturge on Broadway's *Catch Me if You Can*. Additional past participants have included 5th Avenue favorites Jared Michael Brown, Gabe Corey, Sarah Davis, Kirsten DeLohr Helland, Diana Huey, and Cayman Ilika, among many others.

For a full list of our nominees, visit our 2012 5th Avenue Awards Nominees page at <http://www.5thavenue.org/education/student-programs#5th-avenue-awards>. Tickets for the Awards Ceremony are \$27.50 for adults, \$16.50 for students, and are available through participating schools. Tickets for the general public are subject to availability and are only on sale the day of the ceremony.

The 5th Avenue Awards Ceremony will be broadcast in its entirety as a live webcast on Facebook. Please visit www.facebook.com/5thAvenueEdu to watch.

The 5th Avenue sincerely thanks Wells Fargo for its sponsorship of this important event for the eighth year in a row. In Washington, Wells Fargo has nearly 5,000 team members and 228 banking, mortgage and financial stores. Wells Fargo & Company is a diversified financial services company with \$1.2 trillion in assets, providing banking, insurance, investments, mortgage, and consumer and commercial finance through more than 10,000 stores and 12,000 ATMs and the Internet (wellsfargo.com and wachovia.com) across North America and internationally.

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