



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CASTING ANNOUNCED FOR  
DISNEY'S *ALADDIN*,  
A NEW STAGE MUSICAL AT  
THE 5TH AVENUE THEATRE**

*Music by Alan Menken; Lyrics by Howard Ashman, Tim Rice & Chad Beguelin  
Book by Chad Beguelin; Directed by Casey Nicholaw  
July 7-31, 2011*

(Wednesday, June 1, 2011 – SEATTLE, WA) The 5th Avenue Theatre is thrilled to announce casting for the highly anticipated premiere of Disney's *Aladdin*, a new stage musical. The show will feature **Adam Jacobs** and **Courtney Reed** as Aladdin and Jasmine, **James Monroe Iglehart** as the Genie, and Seattle mainstay **Seán G. Griffin** as the Sultan. **Jonathan Freeman** takes the stage to embody the role he originally voiced for the film, the Royal Vizier Jafar. He is joined by comedic favorite **Don Darryl Rivera** as Iago. *Aladdin* restores a trio of characters originally conceived by the film's creators: Omar, Babkak, and Kassim, played by **Andrew Keenan-Bolger**, **Brian Gonzales**, and **Brandon O'Neill**, respectively. Broadway's **Casey Nicholaw** will direct. With book by **Chad Beguelin** and hit songs including "Friend Like Me," "Prince Ali," and the Oscar®-winning "A Whole New World" by **Alan Menken**, **Howard Ashman** and **Tim Rice**, *Aladdin* will enchant audiences of all ages.

*Aladdin* plays **July 7-July 31** (press opening July 21) at **The 5th Avenue Theatre** (1308 5th Avenue, Seattle.) For tickets and information, the public may visit [www.5thavenue.org](http://www.5thavenue.org), or call the box office at (206) 625-1900. Tickets may also be purchased at 888-5TH-4TIX (584-4849).

"We are delighted to be partnering with The 5th Avenue Theatre on this thrilling new full-length stage version of *Aladdin*," said Thomas Schumacher, Producer and President Disney

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Theatrical Productions. “The 5th has proven itself a loving birthplace for new American musicals and they are the perfect partner for exploring the dynamic original vision of *Aladdin*’s two creators, Howard Ashman and Alan Menken, in collaboration with some of some of the most astute audiences in the nation.”

This new stage version of *Aladdin* incorporates all of the beloved songs from the film's Oscar®-winning score plus never-before-heard Menken/Ashman songs restored from early drafts of the film. It marks a return to the authors' original vision: a loving homage to the Hope-Crosby road pictures with a score invoking the jazz sound of stars like Cab Calloway and Fats Waller.

"New musicals have become a large part of the mission of The 5th Avenue Theatre and we are thrilled that Disney has selected our theatre to produce the premiere of this new work," says The 5th Avenue’s Executive Producer and Artistic Director David Armstrong, adding, “I am especially thrilled to have Casey Nicholaw back at The 5th where his amazing career first got started."

Direct from the sensational Broadway hit *The Book of Mormon* for which he has received a Tony® Award nomination for Best Director, acclaimed director and choreographer **Casey Nicholaw** returns to the place where it all began: The 5th Avenue Theatre. He received his first professional gig as choreographer at The 5th Avenue Theatre on *The Prince and the Pauper* in 2001. On Broadway, Nicholaw has won praise as the choreographer of *Spamalot*, and as director/choreographer of *The Drowsy Chaperone* and *Elf: The Broadway Musical*, garnering three additional Tony® nominations for his work.

Nicholaw’s additional New York credits include stagings of *Anyone Can Whistle* and *Follies* (direction/choreography), *Bye Bye Birdie* (choreography) and *Can-Can* (musical staging) at City Center Encores!; *Candide* starring Patti LuPone and Kristin Chenoweth at the New York Philharmonic; and *South Pacific* at Carnegie Hall with Reba McEntyre and Brian Stokes Mitchell (also on PBS *Great Performances*). He directed and choreographed the world premieres of *Minsky’s* at Center Theater Group and *Robin and the 7 Hoods* at the Old Globe.

Broadway veteran **Jonathan Freeman** joins the cast to play one of Disney’s most celebrated villains, Jafar, the role he originated in the Disney film *Aladdin*. In addition to his celebrated role in the film, he has appeared in nearly every Disney Theatrical Productions Broadway show, playing Grimsby in the original cast of *The Little Mermaid*, Cogsworth in *Beauty and the Beast*, and Admiral Boom/Bank Chairman in *Mary Poppins*. He makes his first appearance at The 5th in *Aladdin*.

“I am so thrilled that Jonathan will make his 5th Avenue debut in this production,” Armstrong says. “He is one of the greatest character actors in Broadway history, and I think audiences will be fascinated to see him play live on-stage the role that he created in the animated film.”

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Freeman received a Tony® Award nomination for Best Featured Actor in a Musical for his turn as the Headwaiter in *She Loves Me*. His other Broadway credits include Roger De Bris in *The Producers*, Bert Barry in *42nd Street*, Pitkin W. Bridgework in *On the Town*, and Mr. Bratt in the 1996 revival of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. Freeman has also been seen Off-Broadway at City Center Encores, Primary Stages, Carnegie Hall, The Public Theatre, and many others. He has performed around the country in such prestigious houses as Seattle Repertory Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, Houston Grand Opera, and Williamstown Theater Festival, to name a few.

**James Monroe Iglehart** will temporarily depart the Broadway cast of *Memphis* to play the Genie in a jazzy reinvention of the character consistent with Alan Menken and Howard Ashman's original vision. Iglehart has been wildly popular as "Big Love" singer Bobby in the Tony® Award-winning *Memphis*, a role he originated in the world premiere and pre-Broadway engagement at The 5th Avenue Theatre. Iglehart was featured in the original cast of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* as Mitch Mahoney and played The Cowardly Lion in *The Wiz* at City Center Encores! opposite Ashanti as Dorothy and Orlando Jones as The Wiz.

*Aladdin* introduces Seattle to two rising stars in the roles of Aladdin and Jasmine: **Adam Jacobs** and **Courtney Reed**. Jacobs will join rehearsals direct from the national tour of Disney's *The Lion King* where he is currently playing Simba. Jacobs has also toured the country in productions of *Mamma Mia!* and *Les Misérables*. On Broadway he has performed as Marius in *Les Misérables* at the Broadhurst Theater. Courtney Reed recently finished a run as Carla in Broadway's *In the Heights*, and has also performed in Broadway's *Mamma Mia!*

Returning to The 5th Avenue Theatre stage is **Seán G. Griffin** as the lovable Sultan, Jasmine's father. Griffin has performed at The 5th Avenue Theatre in musicals including *Mame*, *West Side Story*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *My Fair Lady*. A mainstay of the Seattle theater scene, Griffin has been seen most recently in *Of Mice and Men* at Seattle Rep and *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* at ACT Theatre. He performs regularly as Ebenezer Scrooge in ACT's *A Christmas Carol*, and has also performed locally at Intiman Theatre and Seattle Children's Theatre. He has appeared on Broadway in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Ned and Jack*, *The National Health*, *Ah! Wilderness*, *Poor Murderers*, and *The Queen and the Rebels*, in addition to guest star appearances on a variety of television shows including *Ally McBeal*, *E.R.*, *Malcolm in the Middle*, *Northern Exposure*, *Murder She Wrote*, and many more.

Joining the cast as Jafar's wily sidekick Iago is Seattle's **Don Darryl Rivera**. Rivera was most recently seen at Teatro Zinzani in *Zirkus Fantasma* and has appeared in numerous productions at the internationally acclaimed Seattle Children's Theatre including *The Bremontown Musicians*, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, and *Busytown*. Rivera has also appeared at Centerstage Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, and Strawberry Theatre Workshop.

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The new stage version of ***Aladdin*** restores from the film's early drafts a trio of characters who act both as narrators and as Aladdin's band of street rat friends: Kassim, Omar, and Babkak. Fresh from his acclaimed performance as Sky Masterson in The 5th's *Guys and Dolls*, **Brandon O'Neill** originates the role of Kassim. A regular at The 5th, O'Neill has been seen previously in *My Funny Valentine*, *A Christmas Story*, *Candide*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat*, *Cabaret*, *Buddy*, *Wonderful Town*, *Miss Saigon*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, and *The Rocky Horror Show*. Babkak is portrayed by **Brian Gonzales**, who played Barfee both on Broadway and in the national tour of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. He has performed around the country in such prestigious houses as Lyric Stage Company, Dallas Theatre Centre, Gulfshore Playhouse, and others. **Andrew Keenan-Bolger** plays the role of Omar. Keenan-Bolger was seen most recently both on Broadway and in the first national tour of Disney and Cameron Mackintosh's *Mary Poppins*. He performed the role of Leaf Conebear in the first national tour of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, Jojo in the original Broadway cast of *Seussical*, Chip in Broadway's *Beauty and the Beast*, and Young Max in the first national tour of *The Grinch*.

Rounding out the ensemble are **Tia Altinay**, **Kristin Culp**, **Nick DeSantis**, **Ronald Duncan**, **C.J. Eldred**, **Daisy Hobbs**, **David Janett**, **Kenway Hon Wai K. Kua**, **Nikki Long**, **Stanley Martin**, **Creighton Oliver**, **Shanna Marie Palmer**, **Bobby Pestka**, **Connor Russell**, **Manuel Santos**, **Allysa Shorte**, **Daniel J. Watts**, and **Matt Wolfe**.

Music for *Aladdin* is by **Alan Menken** (*Beauty and the Beast*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Tangled*), who has won a total of eight Oscars®, more than any living person. Lyrics are by the late **Howard Ashman** (*Little Shop of Horrors*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Little Mermaid*) and **Tim Rice** (*Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Chess*, *The Lion King*). ***Aladdin*** librettist **Chad Beguelin** also wrote the books for *The Rhythm Club*, *Wicked City* and *The Wedding Singer*, which premiered at The 5th Avenue in 2006. Menken and Beguelin contribute additional lyrics.

Production artists include set designer **Anna Louizos** (*White Christmas*, *In The Heights*), Tony® Award-winning costume designer **Gregg Barnes** (*The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Mame* at The 5th Avenue), Tony® Award-winning lighting designer **Natasha Katz** (*Beauty and the Beast*, *Aida*), dance arranger **Glen Kelly** (*The Producers*, *Drowsy Chaperone*) and musical supervisor **Michael Kosarin** (*Beauty and the Beast*, *Sister Act*).

Steve Fickinger, VP Creative Development and Licensing for Disney Theatrical Productions, said, "Alan Menken brought to us the idea of returning to the highly theatrical vision he and Howard Ashman had originally conceived but that had proved unsuitable for the film. Our goal with this pilot production of *Aladdin* at The 5th Avenue is to launch this title for inclusion in our innovative professional and regional theater licensing catalog."

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The animated film *Aladdin* was released by Disney in 1992 and was a critical and box office smash, grossing over \$504 million worldwide and becoming the highest-grossing film of the year. Adapted from Arabian folktales and the famous "One Thousand and One Nights," *Aladdin* tells the story of a resourceful young man who dares to woo a princess with the help of an all-powerful Genie. The film introduced the hit songs "Friend Like Me" and "A Whole New World," which won one of the film's two Academy Awards® as Best Original Song. Part of the "Disney Renaissance" that began with 1989's *The Little Mermaid*, the film *Aladdin* was praised for its witty script and tuneful, eclectic score.

Special thanks to The 5th's 2010-11 season co-sponsors Safeco Insurance and US Bank. We are happy to announce Union Bank and Homewood Suites as production sponsors for *Aladdin*.

### **More about The 5th Avenue Theatre**

The 5th Avenue Theatre is one of the nation's premier incubators for new musicals. In the past decade, it has produced ten premiere musicals, five of which have been produced on Broadway, and two of which have won Tony® Awards for Best Musical (*Hairspray* and *Memphis*). The 5th Avenue Theatre is also known for its world class, critically acclaimed productions of musicals chosen from both the contemporary canon and the Golden Age of Broadway.

Unique in its Chinese-inspired design, this exquisite theater opened in 1926 as a venue for vaudeville and film. In 1980, the non-profit 5th Avenue Theatre began producing and presenting top-quality live musical theater. Today, under the leadership of Executive Producer and Artistic Director David Armstrong, Managing Director Bernadine Griffin and Producing Director Bill Berry, The 5th Avenue Theatre attracts an annual attendance of more than 287,000 and ranks among the nation's largest and most respected musical theater companies.

In addition to its main stage productions, The 5th Avenue Theatre is also committed to encouraging the next generation of theatergoers through its extensive Educational Outreach Program which includes: The Adventure Musical Theatre Touring Company, The 5th Avenue High School Musical Theatre Awards, the Student Matinee Program, and Spotlight Nights. For more information about The 5th Avenue Theatre, its season and its programs, please visit [www.5thavenue.org](http://www.5thavenue.org).

### **FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

**WHAT:** Madcap adventure and whirlwind romance come to life at The 5th Avenue Theatre's highly anticipated premiere of *Aladdin*, a new stage musical adapted from Disney's hugely popular Academy Award-winning animated feature film. The show will feature **Adam Jacobs** and **Courtney Reed** as Aladdin and Jasmine, **James Monroe Iglehart** as the Genie, and Seattle mainstay **Seán G. Griffin** as the Sultan. **Jonathan**

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**WHEN:** *Previews: July 7-20, 2011*  
Opening Night: July 21 (press night)  
Closing Performance: July 31

**SHOW** Tuesdays & Wednesdays – 7:30 PM  
**TIMES:** Thursdays & Fridays – 8:00 PM  
Saturdays – 2:00 PM & 8:00 PM  
Sundays – 1:30 PM & 7:00 PM

**WHERE:** **The 5th Avenue Theatre**  
(1308 5th Avenue, Seattle)

**TICKETS:** For single tickets (starting at \$28.00) and information, please visit [www.5thavenue.org](http://www.5thavenue.org) or call the box office at (206) 625-1900. Tickets may also be purchased at (888) 5TH-4TIX.

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