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The 5th Avenue Theatre Announces Inaugural NextFest: A Festival of New Musicals *July 20-August 15, 2015*

(Friday, May 8, 2015 – SEATTLE, WA) **The 5th Avenue Theatre New Works Program** will bring a new kind of festival to Seattle's vibrant arts community this summer with its inaugural **NextFest: A Festival of New Musicals**. Taking place in the historic theater's rehearsal halls and studios **July 20-August 15, 2015**, NextFest is a celebration of new musicals at various stages of development ranging from a first read-through of new text and music all the way to a fully staged studio presentation of a work.

"The festival is a concentrated month of developing new works of all shapes and sizes," says 5th Avenue Producing Artistic Director **Bill Berry**. "Seattle is fertile ground for this. We have the resources and the artistry here to bring a show to life from the kernel of an idea to a full-scale production. NextFest focuses those resources."

"Throughout the year The 5th produces isolated writing residencies, retreats and readings," says The 5th Avenue's Alhadeff Family Director of New Works and Music Supervisor **Ian Eisendrath**. "NextFest concentrates that creativity into a short window of time, bringing a variety of creators and their works together, and building an intensity and synergy that will challenge and inspire everyone involved to create rich and exciting new stories, songs and characters."

The development of new musicals is an integral piece of The 5th Avenue Theatre's mission; the organization has long believed that the development of new musicals is one of the most important investments that can be made in the art form. The organization saw a need to create a pipeline for new musicals in need of cultivation and support. NextFest will provide that in abundance. Rather than focusing exclusively on shows that are audience-ready, NextFest gives time, space and resources to musical theater writers and composers at all stages of development, from the kernel of an idea developed in a writer's retreat to a more complete show explored through a multi-week developmental lab. NextFest also provides an opportunity for members of the New Works Program's Seattle Writers Group to showcase their projects.

NextFest will not be open to the general public. However, festival passes are a benefit of an Artist's Circle Membership. To learn more about becoming an Artist's Circle Member, please call 206-625-1418 and ask for the Circles Office.

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The Projects of NextFest

Paint Your Wagon

By Lerner & Loewe

New Book by Jon Marans

4-Week Development Lab

The 5th Avenue Theatre is creating a brand new script for Lerner and Loewe's incredible score, which features the original songs including "They Call the Wind Mariah," "A Wandrin' Star" and "I Talk To The Trees." Pulitzer Prize-nominated playwright Jon Marans has been commissioned to write the book for this fresh, gritty adventure about a group of disparate people from all over the world who leave everything they know and risk their lives to strike it rich in the great California Gold Rush.

Beatsville

Book by Glen Slater

Music and Lyrics by Wendy Wilf

29-Hour Reading

Beatsville, a bebop-influenced musical, takes place in Greenwich Village, 1959—playground of goateed artists, turtlenecked poets, and bongo-playing jazzbos. When hopelessly square Walter Paisley accidentally kills a cat and hides it in a lump of clay, the beatniks declare "Dead Cat" a masterpiece, and Walter a genius. More "sculptures" bring more acclaim—but will the world discover that Walter's body of work consists of actual bodies?

Something Wicked This Way Comes

Book by Brian Hill

Music by Neil Bartram

Based on the novel by Ray Bradbury

Retreat & Table Read

In this musical adaptation of Ray Bradbury's classic cult favorite, Charles Halloway is a 54-year-old librarian struggling to raise his 13-year-old son Will in Depression-era rural Illinois. When a malevolent carnival rolls into town and threatens the souls of the town's population, Will and his thrill-seeking friend Jim try to expose carnival owner Mr. Dark's sinister plans. But the town is quickly seduced by the charismatic Mr. Dark and the boys have to turn to the only one who will believe their seemingly tall tales about the carnival—Charles. Together, this unlikely trio fights and thwarts Mr. Dark, creating a bond between father and son that was never there before.

Single Girl's Guide

Book by Gordon Greenberg

Music by Tommy Newman

Retreat & Table Read

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Jane Austen meets Helen Gurley Brown in a new musical that celebrates love and the joys of living on your own terms. Filled with the buoyant sounds and bright spirit of the mid-1960s, *The Single Girls Guide* is a fizzy riff on *Sex and The Single Girl* that echoes the questions we continue to ask about marriage, sex and being single.

Persuasion (Writers Group)

Adaption from Jane Austen

Book by Harold Taw

Music by Chris Jeffries

29-Hour Reading

Can a second chance at love be sweeter than the first? *Persuasion* is an adult fairytale. After a romance that went horribly wrong, we jubilantly follow Anne Elliot's fight to earn an even happier ending. One of the world's greatest love stories, Jane Austen's final novel soars to life in this ravishing new musical.

Fixing Einstein (Writers Group)

Book by Lauren Goldman Marshall

Music by Ian Williams

29-Hour Reading

Have you ever wished you could split yourself in two? In *Fixing Einstein*, Victoria, a cutting-edge neuroscientist facing a degenerative illness. She clones herself, intending that her clone will carry on her work and care for her unsuspecting husband Michael and autistic 12-year-old twin boys, as she goes off on one last travel adventure. Her clone, Vicki, has her own ideas about how to live her new life, but finds the family resistant to change. Just when it seems to be working, Victoria unexpectedly returns.

Fourth Estate (Writers Group)

Book by Andrew Russell

Music by Richard Gray

29-Hour Reading

The Fourth Estate unpacks government secrets, questions American history, and celebrates the power of the press by bringing onto the same stage two female journalists and their controversial subjects: Dorothy Kilgallen and Jack Ruby, and Laura Poitras and Edward Snowden.

Other Special Events

Throughout the festival, The 5th will play host to special concerts, cocktail events, panels, and even a first glimpse at two musical projects so fresh that their titles aren't set. Look for behind-the-scenes interviews with writers, sneak peeks at material from our festival creative teams, and a pitch session from the people behind Cirque du Soleil's *Le Rêve*.

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About The 5th Avenue Theatre's New Works Program

The 5th Avenue Theatre is one of the nation's leading producers and creators of new work, having premiered 17 original Broadway-caliber musicals since 2001. But The 5th's commitment to new musicals runs deeper than the fully realized productions audiences see onstage. Under the leadership of Producing Artistic Director Bill Berry and The Alhadeff Family Director of New Works and Music Supervisor Ian Eisendrath, The 5th Avenue Theatre's New Works Program fosters the creation of new musicals in each phase of development through writer's retreats, table readings and workshops. The New Works Program creates specially-crafted development programs for each show that comes under its care, and is committed to creating a positive and safe environment that supports the unique needs of each project.

The New Works mission is to advance the art form of musical theater through the creation and production of the next generation of musicals; to support and respond to the specific needs of individual projects throughout each phase of development; and to create integrated, dynamic partnerships between The 5th Avenue Theatre and writers of new musicals in Seattle, across the country, and around the world.

About The 5th Avenue Theatre

The non-profit 5th Avenue Theatre is acclaimed as one of the nation's leading musical theater companies and is especially renowned for its production and development of new works. Since 2002, the Seattle-based company has produced 17 new musicals. To date, nine (including the sensational hit *Disney's Aladdin*) have moved on to Broadway premieres, earning a combined 15 Tony Awards, including two 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. Today, under the leadership of Executive Producer and Artistic Director David Armstrong, Managing Director Bernadine C. Griffin and Producing Artistic Director Bill Berry, this non-profit theater company attracts an annual attendance of more than 300,000, including over 25,000 subscribers – one of the largest theater subscriptions in North America.

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 programs. For more information about The 5th Avenue Theatre, its season and its programs, please visit www.5thavenue.org.

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