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**Broadway Hit *A Christmas Story, The Musical*
is Coming Home for the Holidays
at The 5th Avenue Theatre**

Book by Joseph Robinette

Music and Lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul

Directed by Brandon Ivie; Choreography by Mara Newbery

November 25-December 30, 2014

(Tuesday, October 28, 2014 – SEATTLE, WA) Rehearsals begin today for ***A Christmas Story, The Musical*** – the sensational hit Seattle can't stop talking about. After premiering at **The 5th Avenue Theatre** in 2010, ***A Christmas Story, The Musical*** spent two wildly successful holiday seasons in New York City and spurred a national tour. Now this delightful musical is returning home for the holidays. With direction by Seattle's own **Brandon Ivie**, (the associate director for the show's Broadway premiere) and choreography by **Mara Newbery**, this sensational hit stars real-life husband and wife **Dane Stokinger** and **Jessica Skerritt** as The Old Man and Mother, alongside **Mark Jeffrey James Weber** as Ralphie and **Brandon Oke** as Randy. Acclaimed Seattle actor **Kurt Beattie** makes his 5th Avenue debut, joining the cast as Jean Shepherd.

A Christmas Story, The Musical plays November 25-December 30 (press opening December 4) at **The 5th Avenue Theatre** (1308 5th Ave, Seattle, WA 98101). Tickets (starting at \$29) may be purchased online at www.5thavenue.org, by phone at 206-625-1900, or at the Box Office at 1308 5th Avenue in Downtown Seattle.

A Christmas Story, The Musical follows a bespectacled boy named Ralphie and his one wish for Christmas - a Red Ryder BB Gun. Up against a kooky leg lamp, an outrageous pair of pink bunny pajamas, one cranky department store Santa and a triple-dog-dare to lick a freezing flagpole, Ralphie must overcome all odds to make his Christmas dream a reality. Featuring a book by **Joseph Robinette**, and music and lyrics by **Benj Pasek** and **Justin Paul**, ***A Christmas Story, The Musical*** is based upon the motion picture ***A Christmas Story*** (Turner Entertainment Co., Distributed by Warner Bros, Written by Jean Shepherd, Leigh Brown, and Bob Clark) and ***In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash*** (written by Jean Shepherd.)

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“We could not be more thrilled to have *A Christmas Story* back on our stage,” said 5th Avenue Executive Producer and Artistic Director David Armstrong. “Developing new musicals is at the heart of what we do here at The 5th, so it is exceptionally rewarding when a musical like *A Christmas Story* experiences such great success across the country, and then returns to our stage. We are excited to give our Seattle stars the chance to bring this show to life.”

About the Director

Issaquah native **Brandon Ivie** returns from New York to direct this holiday hit. Ivie was last at The 5th at the helm of the holiday hit *Rodgers and Hammerstein’s Cinderella*, for which he received a Footlight Award. A Seattle native, Brandon spent four seasons as Casting Associate and Artistic Projects Manager at The 5th, and worked directly on *A Christmas Story, The Musical* when it played at The 5th in 2010. He continued to work with the show through its national tour the following year, and went with the show to Broadway as the associate director. Additional Broadway credits include assisting on productions of *First Date, the Musical*; *Next to Normal*; and *Catch Me If You Can*.

He was recently acclaimed for his direction of the Off-Broadway production of *Jasper in Deadland*, and directed *The Noteworthy Life of Howard Barnes* at the Village Theatre Festival of New Musicals. He is the Gregory Award-winning artistic director of Contemporary Classics where he has directed or produced Seattle premieres of *Next to Normal*; *Zanna, Don’t!*; *The Yellow Wood*; *The Last Five Years* and many others. Ivie also has directing credits including The Lincoln Center Theater, The Public Theater, Signature Theatre, HERE Arts Center, New York Musical Theater Festival, 54 Below (resident director.) He will helm the world premiere of *Lizard Boy* at Seattle Rep in March and is attached to work on *Gigi* at the Kennedy Center.

About the Cast

Mark Jeffrey James Weber returns to The 5th Avenue Theatre as Ralphie Parker after wowing audiences last winter as Oliver Twist in *Oliver!* The Kings School eighth grader is no stranger to the stage and has sung with jazz diva Carmen Bradford, Dove winner Brandon Heath, the Seattle Children’s Chorus, and at the Hampton and DiMiero Jazz Festivals. He is joined by **Brandon Oke** who makes his 5th Avenue debut as little brother (and fussy eater) Randy. A fourth grader from Everett, Oke has been seen in *Peter Pan* at Lyric Light Opera, and delighted families as Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol* at Seattle Musical Theater.

Real life husband-and-wife duo **Dane Stokinger** and **Jessica Skerritt** portray the Old Man and Mother. **Stokinger** was critically-acclaimed for his portrayal of Lancelot (and many others) in The 5th’s hit production of *Monty Python’s Spamalot*, with other 5th Avenue credits including *Pirates of Penzance*, *Damn Yankees*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Candide* and *Guys and Dolls*. He toured nationally and internationally with productions of *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Miss Saigon* and has performed regionally with Village Theatre, Coeur d’Alene Summer Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, East LA Classic Theatre and The Ordway. **Jessica Skerritt** has many 5th Avenue credits of her own, including roles in *ELF – the Musical*, *Hairspray in Concert*, and

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Guys and Dolls. She has also starred in 5th Avenue/ACT co-productions of *Little Shop of Horrors* and *Grey Gardens*. She has performed regionally at ACT – A Contemporary Theatre, Village Theatre, Coeur d’Alene Summer Theater, and Arizona Theatre Company.

Kurt Beattie makes his 5th Avenue debut as beloved radio personality Jean Shepherd (the author of the original stories upon which the show is based). The artistic director of ACT – A Contemporary Theater, Beattie has worked for nearly 40 years throughout the country as an actor, playwright, and director. He has performed regionally at such theaters as Intiman, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, and The Empty Space Theatre.

Liz McCarthy returns to The 5th to portray Miss Shields after eight years away from the stage. Prior to that, she appeared regularly at the best houses in Seattle, including Seattle Repertory Theatre, ACT – A Contemporary Theatre, Intiman Theatre, and Seattle Children’s Theatre.

Ralphie’s world of friends (and enemies) includes **Liam Loughridge** as Schwartz, **Bryan M. Kinder** as Flick, **Caden Brauch** as Scut Farkus and **Kristoffer Holtan** as Grover Dill. The children’s ensemble also features **Noah Barr**, **Callan Barth**, **Mikaela Bautista**, **Eliana Coe**, **Kelsie Engen**, **Jasmine Harrick**, **Quinn Maxwell Lieblich**, **Tarah Mehra**, **Priya Niehaus**, and **Amelia Stiles**.

Joining the show as the cast are **Taryn Darr**, **Sarah Rose Davis**, **Stephen Diaz**, **Allen Fitzpatrick**, **Charlie Johnson**, **Ulyber Mangune**, **McKayla Marso**, **Trina Mills**, **Richard Peacock**, **Matthew Posner**, **Aaron Shanks** and **Jenny Shotwell**.

About the Choreographer

Choreographer **Mara Newbery** brings her experience as the dance captain in the Broadway production of *A Christmas Story, The Musical* to Seattle where she will bring lively new dance numbers to life for The 5th Avenue audiences. Additional credits include roles in *On Your Toes* at New York City Center Encores and the first national tour of *Shrek, the Musical*, with regional credits including Paper Mill Playhouse, North Shore Music Theatre, Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera, and Madison Square Garden, among others.

About the Bumpus’ Dogs

Broadway stars **Pete** and **Lily** are a couple of bloodhounds trained by Tony®-honored animal trainer **William Berloni**. The two hounds were rescued from a shelter by Berloni and trained for that infamous holiday scene in which a certain turkey gets stolen by the neighbor’s dogs. They will reprise their roles here in Seattle under handler **Schuyler Beeman**.

About the Creative Team

A Christmas Story, The Musical features a talented creative team includes music director **Kat Sherrell**, lighting designer **Tom Sturge**, scenic coordinator **Erik Holden**, costume coordinator **Michelle Terese Grimm**, sound designer **Justin Stasiw**, and hair and makeup designer **Mary Jones**. Additional staff includes assistant director **Pauls Macs**, assistant

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choreographer **Michael Greer**, assistant lighting designer **Tristan Roberson** and associate music director **Chris Ranney**.

The 5th Avenue's 2014 production of *A Christmas Story, The Musical* features the original Broadway costumes by **Elizabeth Hope Clancy** and sets based on the original Broadway set design by **Walt Spangler**. The direction and choreography are based on the original Broadway work of **John Rando** and **Warren Carlyle**, respectively.

The stage management staff includes production stage manager **Amy Gornet**, assistant stage managers **Jessica C. Bomball** and **Rachel Bury**, production assistants **Rachael Dorman** and **Lisa Armstrong**, and child supervisor **Becca Rowlett**.

About The 5th Avenue Theatre

The 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.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: The new holiday tradition is coming back to town. After premiering at **The 5th Avenue Theatre** in 2010, this hit spent two wildly successful holiday seasons in New York City and spurred a national tour. Now this delightful musical is returning home for the holidays. With direction by Seattle's own **Brandon Ivie**, (the associate director for the show's Broadway premiere) and choreography by **Mara Newbery**, *A Christmas Story, The Musical* stars real-life husband and wife **Dane Stokinger** and **Jessica Skerritt** as The Old Man and Mother, alongside **Mark Jeffrey James Weber** as Ralphie and **Brandon Oke** as Randy.

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WHEN: *Previews: Tuesday, November 25-December 3, 2014*
Opening Night: Thursday, December 4, 2014 (press night)
Closing Performance: Wednesday, December 30, 2014

Performance times vary. Please visit www.5thavenue.org for details.

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

TICKETS: For single tickets (starting at \$29) and information, please visit www.5thavenue.org or call the Box Office at (206) 625-1900. Tickets may also be purchased at (888) 5TH-4TIX.

Special thanks to The 5th Avenue Theatre 2014/15 season sponsors ArtsFund, U.S. Bank and the *Seattle Times*, and official airline Delta Air Lines. Additional thanks to production sponsor Snoqualmie Tribe, contributing sponsors 4Culture and Macy's, and restaurant sponsor Il Fornaio.

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