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Seattle's Theatrical Royalty Takes The 5th Avenue Stage in *Rodgers & Hammerstein's Carousel*, a Beloved Tale of Love, Tragedy, and Redemption

A co-production between The 5th Avenue Theatre and Spectrum Dance Theater
Music by Richard Rodgers; Book and Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein
Based on Ferenc Molnar's play Liliom as adapted by Benjamin Glazer
Choreography by Donald Byrd
Directed by Bill Berry
February 5 – March 1, 2015

(Monday, January 12, 2015 -- SEATTLE) Under the direction of Producing Artistic Director **Bill Berry**, rehearsals have begun at **The 5th Avenue Theatre** for a fresh and exciting new take on the tempestuous romance, ***Rodgers & Hammerstein's Carousel***. In its fourth major collaboration with **Spectrum Dance Theater**, The 5th is thrilled to welcome Tony Award®-nominated choreographer **Donald Byrd** to the creative table, and a host of Seattle's theatrical royalty to its stage. This exciting new staging will star the radiant **Laura Griffith** as Julie and 5th Avenue favorite **Brandon O'Neill** as Billy in his first Seattle production following his Broadway debut in *Disney's Aladdin*. The cast also includes local luminaries **Anne Allgood**, **Eric Ankrim**, **Allen Fitzpatrick**, **Séan G. Griffin**, **Cynthia Jones**, and **Billie Wildrick**, and marks The 5th Avenue debut of rising talent **Joshua Downs**.

"This is truly one of the most beautiful musicals written by Rodgers & Hammerstein," said **5th Avenue Theatre Executive Producer and Artistic Director David Armstrong**. "To truly do it justice, you have to commit to putting the finest talent onstage and the finest musicians in the pit, and I believe we have done just that. Between stars like Laura and Brandon portraying these rich and vital characters, Spectrum dancers performing Donald's choreography, and a 21-piece orchestra bringing this vibrant score to life, *Carousel* will be a gem not to be missed."

Rodgers & Hammerstein's Carousel plays **February 5 – March 1, 2015** (*press opening February 12*) at **The Fifth Avenue Theatre** (1308 5th Avenue, 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.

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Told with heartbreaking tenderness, *Carousel* tells the love story of carnival barker Billy Bigelow and mill worker Julie Jordan. After his untimely death, Billy is allowed to return to earth for just one day for a chance to redeem his life and make peace with the wife and daughter he left behind. Named the “best musical of the 20th century” by *Time Magazine*, and the personal favorite of Richard Rodgers himself, **Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Carousel*** is one of the most timeless and compelling musicals in the American musical theater cannon. Audiences will be swept away by the full lush score performed by a 21 piece orchestra, playing cherished songs such as “If I Loved You,” “June is Bustin’ Out All Over,” and “You’ll Never Walk Alone.”

About the Cast

Recent Seattle transplant **Laura Griffith** plays Julie Jordan. Audiences will remember her from a wide range of performances at The 5th Avenue Theatre, including Lucy Honeychurch in *A Room with a View*, the Lady of the Lake in *Monty Python's Spamalot*, and Cunnegonde in *Candide*. Griffith has appeared on Broadway in several critically acclaimed and innovative productions, including the Lincoln Center revival of *South Pacific*, *The Light in the Piazza*, *Rodgers & Hammerstein's Oklahoma!*, and *Sweet Smell of Success*. She toured the country in *The Light in the Piazza*, and was nominated for a Helen Hayes Award for her performance at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C.

Brandon O'Neill returns to Seattle and The 5th Avenue to play the hot-tempered Billy Bigelow after a year on Broadway where he originated the role of Kassim in *Disney's Aladdin*. A favorite on the Seattle stage, O'Neill will be remembered most recently for his dashing turn as the Pirate King in *The Pirates of Penzance* and Collins in the 5th Avenue Theatre's acclaimed production of *RENT*. Additionally, fans may recognize O'Neill from his roles as “Hanuman” in *Ramayana* at ACT Theatre, “Gabe” in the world premiere musical *First Date*, or “Kassim” in *Disney's Aladdin*. O'Neill has also performed Sondheim with the Seattle Symphony, conducted by the late Marvin Hamlisch, and he can be heard on the original cast recording of *A Christmas Story, the Musical*.

Carousel marks the 23rd 5th Avenue production for **Billie Wildrick** and the debut appearance of baritone **Joshua Downs** at The 5th Avenue Theatre. Wildrick plays the effervescent Carrie Pipperidge who is determined to marry the successful but stiff fisherman Enoch Snow (Downs). Wildrick recently returned from playing Mother in *A Christmas Story, the Musical* at The Ordway in St. Paul. Along with her many local credits, she appeared in Broadway's *Scandalous*. A graduate of Pepperdine University, Downs is a member of Jet City Improv and performs frequently with Second Story Repertory in Redmond.

Carousel has long been a showcase for the talents of local actress **Anne Allgood** who made her high school debut in this classic musical. She understudied the great mezzo-soprano Shirley Verrett in the 1994 Lincoln Center revival as Nettie Fowler, the role she takes on for this production. Nettie is the owner of a seaside spa and cousin to Julie who encourages her with the unforgettable anthem, “You’ll Never Walk Alone.” Along with a dozen appearances at The 5th, Allgood is a veteran of many Broadway shows and national tours and regularly appears on a wide variety of Seattle stages, most recently in Intiman's epic production of *Angels in America, Parts 1 & 2*.

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Beloved Seattle favorites fill out the starry cast: **Eric Ankrim** plays the scheming Jigger Craigin; **Cynthia Jones** is Mrs. Mullin, the jealous owner of the carousel; **Séan G. Griffin** plays the Starkeeper and Dr. Seldon; and **Allen Fitzpatrick** is the mill owner, Mr. Bascombe. **Alex Crozier** and **Madelyn Koch** join the cast, from Spectrum Dance Theater, as Carnival Boy and Louise.

The talented ensemble includes **Kyle Bernbach, Betsy Button, Marlette Buchanan, Sarah Rose Davis, Candice Donehoo, Anne Eisendrath, Chance Michael Eldridge, Richard Gray, Frances Leah King, Danni Krehbiel, Cameron Lee, Chelsea LeValley, Jeffrey Lewis, Matthew Posner, Aaron Shanks, Jessica Skerritt, Dane Stokinger, and Eli Wills**. Spectrum Dance Theater cast members include **Jeremy Cline, Jade Solomon Curtis, Blair Elliot, Davione Gordon, Shadou Mintrone, Emily Pihlaja, Andrew Pontius, Leo Rose Reich, Fausto Rivera, and Jaclyn Wheatley**. The children's ensemble includes **Kyle Ballard, Lucy Eisendrath, Corinne Fischer, Ethan Lech, Isabel Menna, Heidi Myrick, and Sophie Poole**.

About the Director

Producing Artistic Director Bill Berry returns to direct *Carousel* after staging the wildly popular *Little Shop of Horrors* (co-production with ACT Theatre) which received the *Seattle Times* Footlight Award for Best Musical of 2014. Berry is the Producing Artistic Director of The 5th Avenue Theatre, where he has directed acclaimed productions of *On the Town*, *West Side Story* (Footlight Award), *Wonderful Town* (Footlight Award), *Smokey Joe's Café* and *The Wizard of Oz*. He also directed *On the Town* at Paper Mill Playhouse. His re-imagined production of *Cabaret* received awards in St. Paul and Houston and has been performed at The 5th Avenue Theatre, The Ordway, the American Musical Theatre of San Jose and Theatre Under The Stars.

About the Choreographer

Donald Byrd became artistic director of Spectrum Dance Theater in 2002. Prior to his tenure at Spectrum, he was artistic director of Donald Byrd/The Group, his critically acclaimed company based in Los Angeles and New York. He has created more than 80 dance works, including works for the Alvin Ailey Company, the Dayton Contemporary Dance company, and Philadelphia Dance Company (Philadanco), among others. He has worked with New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera, and The Joffrey Ballet. In 1992, Byrd received the Bessie Award (the contemporary dance world's highest honor) for *The Minstrel Show*, and in 2006, he received a Tony nomination for his choreography for *The Color Purple*. Byrd is the recipient of the Mayor's Arts Award for his sustained contributions to Seattle, a United States Artists 2012 Fellowship Recipient, and he was selected as one of the first group of Fellows to the American Academy in Jerusalem.

About the Music Director

Ian Eisendrath is Alhadeff Family Director of New Works and Music Supervisor at the 5th Avenue. He made his Broadway debut in 2012 as the music director and music supervisor for *A Christmas Story, The Musical*. His extensive work at The 5th includes *A Room with a*

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View, Secondhand Lions, A Christmas Story, The Musical, On The Town, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Sunday in the Park with George, West Side Story, Sweeney Todd, Into the Woods, Company, Cabaret and Miss Saigon. He was music director for the world premiere of *A Christmas Story* at the Kansas City Rep (as well as the show's national tour) and *Cabaret* at Theatre Under The Stars in Houston, American Musical Theatre of San Jose and the Ordway Center in St. Paul. He has also conducted three seasons of *The Nutcracker* at Pacific Northwest Ballet.

About the Creative Team

The design team includes set designer **Martin Christoffel**, sound designer **Zach Williamson**, costume designer **Sarah Nash Gates**, hair and makeup designer **Mary Pyanowski**, and lighting designer **Mike Baldassari**. Additional staff includes associate director **Eric Ankrim**, associate choreographer **Jamal Story**, associate lighting designer **Karen Spahn**, associate music director **Elisbeth Ellis**, associate conductor **Bruce Monroe**, and costume design assistant **Michelle Terese Grimm**.

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.

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About Spectrum Dance Theater

Spectrum Dance Theater was founded by Seattle dancers in 1982 to make dance more accessible to diverse communities. Under Donald Byrd's visionary artistic leadership since 2002, Spectrum has emerged as a company of regional and national significance. The

organization has attracted world-class dancers and produced thrilling and challenging works in contemporary dance to critical acclaim. SDT ignites audiences thanks to the ambitious artistic agenda of Donald Byrd, whose appetite to explore the arts knows no boundaries. The *enfant terrible* of the New York dance scene in the 1980s and '90s achieved international visibility for the creation of his *Harlem Nutcracker* and for his Tony-nominated choreography for the Broadway smash, *The Color Purple*. No less ambitious in the 21st century, Byrd leads his company through programming themes that give audiences insight into his far-ranging artistic ambition.

The School at Spectrum Dance Theater reflects the rigorous artistic standards set forth by Donald Byrd, exemplified by the motto "Dance for All." The School offers classes in a variety of styles from ballet to contemporary, at all levels, and to all ages. And the Academy Program, Spectrum's curriculum for students interested in a professional career, offers opportunities to study with Donald Byrd and the Company, and to become a Company apprentice for upper level dancers. For more about Spectrum Dance Theater performances and programs, visit www.spectrumdance.org.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

WHAT: Under the direction of Producing Artistic Director **Bill Berry**, rehearsals have begun at **The 5th Avenue Theatre** for a fresh and exciting new take on the tempestuous romance, ***Rodgers & Hammerstein's Carousel***. In its fourth major collaboration with **Spectrum Dance Theater**, The 5th is thrilled to welcome Tony Award®-nominated choreographer **Donald Byrd** to the creative table, and a host of Seattle's theatrical royalty to its stage. This exciting new staging will star the radiant **Laura Griffith** as Julie and 5th Avenue favorite **Brandon O'Neill** as Billy in his first Seattle production following his Broadway debut in *Disney's Aladdin*. The cast also includes local luminaries **Anne Allgood**, **Eric Ankrim**, **Allen Fitzpatrick**, **Séan G. Griffin**, **Cynthia Jones**, and **Billie Wildrick**, and marks The 5th Avenue debut of rising talent **Joshua Downs**.

WHEN: *Previews: Thursday, February 5-11, 2014*
Opening Night: Thursday, February 12, 2014 (press night)
Closing Performance: Sunday, March 1, 2014

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)

Seattle's Theatrical Royalty Lights Up The 5th Avenue Stage in Rodgers & Hammerstein's Carousel

6 | Page

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, *The Seattle Times* and official airline Delta Air Lines. Additional thanks to contributing sponsor Puget Sound Energy and [Safeco Insurance](#), and media sponsor Classical KING FM.