



Press Contact: Bridget Summers
bsummers@5thavenue.org
(206) 625-1418 x274

Contact Info for Publication:
www.5thavenue.org
206-625-1900 / 888-5TH-4TIX (584-4849)

Collaboration between ACT – A Contemporary Theatre and The 5th Avenue Theatre Continues to Grow with *Little Shop of Horrors*

*Book and Lyrics by Howard Ashman; Music by Alan Menken;
Based on the film by Roger Corman
Directed by Bill Berry*

March 8-June 15, 2014

(February 26, 2014 – SEATTLE, WA) Straight from Skid Row, Audrey II is taking a bite out of Seattle in ***Little Shop of Horrors***, the delightfully demented musical comedy about a man and his plant. Based on the 1960 black comedy film, this hysterical musical devours audiences in the fourth of an incredibly successful string of collaborations between **The 5th Avenue Theatre** and **ACT – A Contemporary Theatre**. After his recent Broadway debut at the helm of *First Date*, The 5th Avenue's own **Bill Berry** will direct this camp horror hit that ran for five years Off-Broadway. *Little Shop of Horrors* features an incredible cast that includes Seattle stars **Joshua Carter, Jessica Skerritt, Jeff Steitzer, David Anthony Lewis, Eric Esteb, Ekello J. Harrid, Jr., Alexandria Henderson, Naomi Morgan,** and **Nicole Rashida Prothro**.

Little Shop of Horrors plays **March 8-June 15, 2014** (press opening March 13) at **ACT – A Contemporary Theatre** (700 Union Street, Seattle, WA 98101). Tickets (starting at \$20) may be purchased online at www.acttheatre.org, by phone at 206-292-7676, or at the ACT Box Office at 700 Union Street in downtown Seattle.

“We were looking for a show that would not only honor the mission of both our great organizations, but with ACT’s 50th Anniversary coming up next season, we wanted to honor some of our favorite moments from this theatre’s history” said ACT Artistic Director Kurt Beattie. “*Little Shop of Horrors* was a musical produced in our company’s early days. Reflecting on what a great success it’s become, it felt very appropriate to bring it back to our stage at this time.”

“*Little Shop of Horrors* is no doubt one of the greatest musicals ever crafted,” said 5th Avenue Artistic Director and Executive Producer David Armstrong. “It is the perfect musical for our two great theaters. This is a show that would be fine on our stage, but in ACT’s more intimate space, it will really blow audiences away.”

Media Contact: Bridget Summers Public Relations Manager
The 5th Avenue Theatre • 1308 5th Avenue Seattle, Washington 98101
email bsummers@5thavenue.org • tel 206.260.2174 • fax 206.292.9610

Called “great, great fun” by *The Wall Street Journal*, *Little Shop of Horrors* follows Seymour, a hapless young florist who desperately longs to win the heart of his fellow florist Audrey, while at the same time raising Audrey II—the mysterious plant with a man-eating appetite. Audiences won’t soon forget the world’s most sadistic dentist, Skid Row’s Doo-Wop-meets-Motown girl group, or the spectacular puppetry that brings to life Audrey II’s ravenous hunger.

About the Director

Bill Berry returns to the director’s chair after recently making his Broadway debut at the helm of another 5th Avenue/ACT Theatre collaboration – *First Date*. “This has always been one of my favorite shows,” Berry said. “It has been a dream of mine to direct this show since the very first time I saw it.” Berry is the Producing Artistic Director of The 5th Avenue Theatre, where he has directed acclaimed productions of *On the Town*, *West Side Story* (*Seattle Times* Footlight Award), *Wonderful Town* (*Seattle Times* 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.

Berry also spearheads the education and outreach programs for The 5th Avenue Theatre. He has significantly expanded the scope and impact of these initiatives including spearheading the creation of Fridays At The 5th, The 5th Avenue Awards honoring excellence in high school musical theater, the Show Talk series and substantially increasing the reach of The 5th Avenue Theatre’s Adventure Musical Theatre Touring Company (AMT) throughout the Northwest. In addition to directing these productions, he has written the book for two AMT productions: *Klondike*, the story of the Alaskan Gold Rush, and *Journey West!*, a musical based on the Lewis and Clark expedition.

About the Cast

Joshua Carter and **Jessica Skerritt** play the hapless lovers Seymour and Audrey in *Little Shop of Horrors*. **Carter** is a recent hit from The 5th Avenue production of *Spamalot* and appeared at The 5th previously in *Guys and Dolls*. At ACT he was featured in *Mary Stewart* and *Das Barbecue*. He has also worked in Seattle at the Intiman, Village Theatre, Seattle Children’s Theatre and Seattle Rep. Carter recently returned from the first national tour of the Broadway show *Once* and can be heard on the original cast recording of *WATT!?!?, A New Musical*. Leading lady **Jessica Skerritt** was a sparkling addition to last year’s co-production between The 5th Avenue and ACT as Young Little Edie in *Grey Gardens*. She’s also been on The 5th Avenue stage in productions of *ELF – The Musical*, *Rodgers and Hammerstein’s Cinderella*, and *Guys and Dolls*. The young ingénue was critically-acclaimed for her role as Kira/Clio in *Xanadu* at Village Theatre, where she has also performed in *The Producers*, *Phoebe*, *Barefoot in the Park*, *Chasing Nicolette*, and *Million Dollar Quartet*.

A stalwart Seattle staple, **Jeff Steitzer** brings his charming and curmudgeonly persona to the role of Mr. Mushnik. No stranger to ACT, Steitzer has starred as Srooge in several iterations of ACT’s annual holiday offering of *A Christmas Carol*. He’s been seen on the 5th

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Avenue stage in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *The Music Man*, *Hairspray in Concert*, and *Titanic in Concert*. Steitzer has performed on Broadway, numerous television shows, and major theatres from coast to coast. However, his voice will most likely live on in perpetuity as the announcer for the incredibly popular video game *Halo*.

David Anthony Lewis plays many parts in this camp horror hit, most notably the sadistic dentist Orin Scrivello. A graduate of Cornish College of the Arts, Lewis has performed at ACT as Mr. Hyde in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, as well as productions of *A Christmas Carol* and *The Cherry Orchard*. His additional Seattle credits include roles at Book-It Repertory Theatre, Taproot Theatre, and Village Theatre.

The plant Audrey II will be brought to life by the talents of **Ekello J. Harrid, Jr.**, as the voice of Audrey II, and **Eric Esteb**, who will serve as master puppeteer. **Harrid** was part of last season's co-production of *Grey Gardens* as Brooks. He has performed at The 5th Avenue in *On the Town* and has been seen many times at Village Theatre. **Esteb** has performed at The 5th Avenue in productions of *Monty Python's Spamalot*, *Secondhand Lions*, *Damn Yankees*, *Rodgers & Hammerstein's Oklahoma!*, and *Guys and Dolls*. He is one half of the Seattle aerial duo The Innamorati.

The trio of Skid Row girls are a feisty bunch. **Alexandria Henderson** plays Chiffon, and participated in The 5th Avenue Theatre's *Hairspray in Concert* last year after receiving a degree from Warner Pacific University. **Naomi Morgan** plays Crystal and has been seen many times onstage at The 5th (most recently in *Oliver!* and *RENT*) and owns her own entertainment company on the side. Making her professional debut is **Nicole Rashida Prothro** as Ronnette, who recently graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

About the Music Director

R.J. Tancioco returns to ACT and The 5th where he provided music direction for the sold-out production of *First Date*. He is a 2010 Gregory Award recipient, a 2011/2013 Gypsy Rose Lee recipient for music direction, and an avid vocal coach, arranger, composer, and enjoys educating youth for theatre and cultivating new musicals. His additional 5th Avenue credits include *RENT*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat*, *Hair*, and *Smokey Joe's Café*. He has also worked at a number of other Seattle theaters, including Village Theatre, Balagan Theatre, and *New Voices* for Contemporary Classics.

About the Creative Team

The design team includes set designer **Martin Christoffel**, costume designer **Pete Rush**, lighting designer **Robert J. Aguilar**, sound designer **Justin Stasiw**. Additional staff includes assistant director **Adam Quinn**, assistant director/choreographer **Crystal Dawn Munkers**, associate music director **Michael Nutting** and assistant sound designer **Brendan Patrick Hogan**. The show will be steered by stage manager **Jeffrey K. Hanson** and assistant stage manager **Erin B. Zatloka**.

About The 5th Avenue Theatre

The 5th Avenue Theatre is one of the nation's premier incubators for new musical theater. Since 2002, the celebrated company has produced 15 new musicals. To date, eight (including the 2012 hit *First Date*) have moved on to Broadway premieres, earning a combined 14 Tony Awards, including two for Best Musical (*Hairspray* and *Memphis*). A ninth, *Disney's Aladdin*, begins its Broadway run on February 26, 2014. 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 C. Griffin and Producing Artistic 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 programs which include: The Adventure Musical Theatre Touring Company, The 5th Avenue Awards Honoring High School Musical Theater, the Rising Star Project, Show Talks with Albert Evans, Curtain Up!, 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.

About ACT – A Contemporary Theatre

ACT is the only local theatre dedicated to producing contemporary work with promising playwrights and local performing artists since 1965. ACT is a cultural engine that makes plays, dance, music, and film that touch us through its annual Mainstage Play series and new works generated from the Young Playwrights Program, the Central Heating Lab, and New Works for the American Stage commissioning program. Because contemporary life demands examination, ACT is driven to inspire and strengthen our diverse community through works that advance our understanding of human life. ACT is an interactive community where artists and the public witness, contemplate and engage in dialogue on today's thought-provoking issues, ideas and art, presented with intelligence, insight, and humor. Dedicated to the advancement and preservation of today's contemporary work for future generations, ACT is a destination for contemporary theatre and arts in downtown Seattle.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: Straight from Skid Row, Audrey II is taking a bite out of Seattle in *Little Shop of Horrors*, the delightfully demented musical comedy about a man and his plant. Based on the 1960 black comedy film, this hysterical musical devours audiences

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WHEN: *Previews: March 8-12*

Opening Night: Thursday, March 13 (press night)

Closing Performance: Sunday, June 15, 2014

SHOW Tuesdays & Wednesdays – 7:30 PM

TIMES: Thursdays & Fridays – 8:00 PM

Saturdays – 2:00 PM & 8:00 PM

Sundays – 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM

No evening performances 3/18, 3/25, 5/13, 5/25, 6/1

No matinee performances 3/9, 4/20,

Added 2pm matinee on 3/20, 3/27, 4/17, 5/15, 5/22, 5/29

WHERE: **ACT – A Contemporary Theatre** in the Falls Theatre,

700 Union Street, Seattle 98101

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 the **ACT Ticket Office**, 206-292-7676 or at www.acttheatre.org.

SPONSORS:

Special thanks to The 5th Avenue Theatre 2013/14 season sponsors ArtsFund, U.S. Bank, and Safeco Insurance, official airline Delta Air Lines, and media sponsor *The Seattle Times*.

ACT gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our 2014 Season Sponsors: ArtsFund, The John Graham Foundation, 4Culture, The Mayor's Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs, and The Shubert Foundation.

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