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It's Fun, Glorious Fun this Holiday Season When *Oliver!* Takes The 5th Avenue Stage

*Directed by David Armstrong; Choreography by Bob Richard
Based on the Novel Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens
Book, Music, and Lyrics by Lionel Bart*

November 29-December 31, 2013

(October 29, 2013 – SEATTLE, WA) This winter The 5th Avenue Theatre presents a singing and dancing spectacular not to be missed: Lionel Bart's beloved classic, ***Oliver!***, the holiday treat that will have audiences saying "Please sir, I want some more." The iconic musical returns to the celebrated 5th Avenue stage for the first time in 20 years, and will feature stunning costumes, dazzling sets, and a massive local cast of 66 (including 36 youngsters), singing and dancing their way through the streets and alleys of Victorian London. Based on the classic Charles Dickens novel, ***Oliver!*** is filled with memorable tunes including "Who Will Buy?", "I'd Do Anything," and "As Long As He Needs Me." ***Oliver!*** features direction by **David Armstrong** and will star **David Pichette** as Fagin, **Grayson Smith** as the Artful Dodger, **Hans Altwies** as Bill Sikes, and **Merideth Kaye Clark** as Nancy. *Oliver Twist* will be played by **Jack Fleischmann** and **Mark Jeffrey James Weber** at alternating performances.

Oliver! plays **November 29-December 31, 2013** (press opening December 5) at **The 5th Avenue Theatre** (1308 5th Ave, Seattle, WA 98101). Tickets (starting at \$40.50) 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.

"*Oliver!* is a musical theater gem that could not be a better fit for the holidays," said Executive Producer and Artistic Director David Armstrong. "With messages of love and family at its core, *Oliver!* is a show that draws people closer together. And with the fantastic music and lyrics of Lionel Bart, it's no wonder. You can't walk away without humming at least one of a dozen favorite songs."

About the Cast

David Pichette returns to The 5th Avenue Theatre this holiday season to star as Fagin, the leader to the gang of ragamuffin street urchins that become Oliver's family. Pichette was critically acclaimed for his portrayal of Major-General Stanley in The 5th Avenue's hit production of *The Pirates of Penzance* this summer. He has appeared at The 5th in *1776*

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as John Adams, *My Fair Lady* as Professor Higgins, *Candide* as Pangloss/Voltaire, *Wonderful Town* as Apopolous, and *Oklahoma!* as Ike Skidmore. A Seattle resident, he has been seen regularly at ACT Theatre, Seattle Rep, Intiman, Seattle Children's Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare, and, in times gone by, at Empty Space and Tacoma Actors Guild. He recently portrayed Ludwig van Beethoven as part of the Seattle Symphony's "Beyond the Score" series.

Jack Fleischmann and **Mark Jeffrey James Weber** will play the title role of *Oliver Twist* at alternating performances. Fleischmann returns to The 5th Avenue Theatre after performing here last winter in *ELF – The Musical*. A 6th grader at Seattle Academy, he began performing at the age of four. He has been participating in Broadway Bound for the past eight years where he has appeared in their productions of *Willy Wonka* (Charlie), *Shrek the Musical* (Lord Farquaad), and *Peter Pan* (Michael). He will make his Book-It Repertory Theater debut in *Frankenstein* in 2014. **Weber** is thrilled to be making his 5th Avenue debut. A 7th grader at King's Schools, he has sung with jazz diva Carmen Bradford, Dove-winner Brandon Heath, the Seattle Children's Chorus, and at the Hampton and DiMiero Jazz Festivals.

Grayson Smith plays The Artful Dodger and is thrilled to be spending another holiday season at The 5th Avenue Theatre, after playing Michael Hobbs in *ELF – The Musical* one year ago. He recently understudied the role of Walter in the world premiere of *Secondhand Lions* at The 5th. Smith's additional credits include *The Sound of Music* at Leavenworth Summer Theatre and *Peter Pan* and *A Christmas Carol* at Central Washington University. He recently made his film debut in *3 Gobblers* as Ralph.

The role of the menacing Bill Sikes will be taken on by Seattle star **Hans Altwies**. Altwies made his 5th Avenue debut as Applegate in *Damn Yankees*. He was seen most recently as Teach in *American Buffalo* at Seattle Repertory Theatre and as Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra* at Seattle Shakespeare Company. He has held multiple starring roles locally at New Century Theatre Company (where he is co-artistic director), Seattle Repertory Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Wooden O, Intiman, Seattle Children's Theatre, and ACT, as well as Shakespeare Santa Cruz. Altwies is the recipient of the 2010 Gregory Award for Outstanding Actor, and recently directed his first film, *Taste*, with MJ Sieber.

Merideth Kaye Clark makes her 5th Avenue debut as Nancy in *Oliver!* Clark, who makes her home in Portland, performed the role of Elphaba in the First National Tour of the Broadway musical *Wicked* more than 150 times in 35 major U.S. cities. Her additional credits include major roles at NY Theatre Workshop, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, The Old Globe, Northern Stage, Irish Repertory, Portland Center Stage, and the Goodspeed Opera House. She has participated in numerous developmental readings and has originated roles in two Off-Broadway musicals. Originally from Kansas City, Missouri, Clark studied neuroscience at Emory University before earning an MFA in musical theatre at San Diego State University.

The cast also features a host of Seattle favorites: **Andrew Davison** (Noah Claypole), **Allen Fitzpatrick** (Mr. Sowerberry/Mr. Bronlow), **Hugh Hastings** (Mr. Bumble, the Beadle),

Naomi Morgan (Charlotte Sowerberry), **Cheryl Massey Peters** (Widow Corney), **Matthew Posner** (Dr. Grimwig), **Karen Skrinde** (Old Sally), **Carol Swarbrick** (Mrs. Sowerberry/Mrs. Bedwin), and **Keaton Whittaker** (Bet).

Supporting the all-star cast is an incredibly talented ensemble including **Andi Alhadeff**, **Scott Brateng**, **Jared Michael Brown**, **Ty Cheng**, **Gabriel Corey**, **Jeannette d'Armand**, **Sarah Rose Davis**, **Paul Flanagan**, **Cayman Ilika**, **Mallory King**, **Robert Krahen**, **Trina Mills**, **Riley Neldam**, **Aaron Shanks**, **Indeah Thomaier**, and **Billie Wildrick**. **Blaine Boyd** joins the cast as the male swing, and **Alana Peters** joins the cast as the female swing.

The massive children's ensemble includes 45 youngsters (not all of whom will appear in every performance): **Eli Barnett**, **Callan Barth**, **Amalya Benhaim**, **Tyler Bocock**, **Jaden Bolibol**, **Caden Brauch**, **Gavyn Brayman**, **Abi Brittle**, **Benicio Bryant**, **Truett Burnett**, **Jake Carlos**, **Taylor Clark**, **Eliana Coe**, **Chris Coon**, **Gage DeSoto**, **Montserrat Fleck**, **Daniel Geiszler**, **Elijah Joseph Goodman**, **Delaney Guyer**, **Eliana Harrick**, **Jasmine Harrick**, **Dexter Johnson**, **Bryan M. Kinder**, **Jaryn Lasentia**, **Ethan Lech**, **Eli Lotz**, **Boaz Malakoff**, **Abigail McDaniel**, **Derek Mulkins**, **Ella Murphy**, **Christopher Murray**, **Ernie Musser**, **Sophie Poole**, **Sam Price**, **Lauren Raabe**, **Seth Remington**, **Anthony Rosenthal**, **Nathaniel Shipley**, **Naeem Shook**, **Soren Smith**, **Cameron Supplee**, **Christian West**, **Matt Wiles**, **Kyan Zielinski**, and **Skyler Wyatt Zimmerman**.

About *Oliver!*

On June 30, 1960, *Oliver!* opened at the New Theatre and received 23 curtain calls. It ran for 2,618 performances in London. With its successful run in London still going strong, it opened at the Imperial Theatre on Broadway on January 6, 1963 and ran for 774 performances. The Broadway production won three Tony Awards, including a Tony for composer Lionel Bart, the first English composer to win a Tony for Best Musical. Several child actors started their careers in the title role including Davy Jones. *Oliver!* was revived very shortly after in 1965, and then again in London in 1977. The subsequent London revival in 1983, produced by Cameron Mackintosh, transferred to Broadway in 1984 starred Patti LuPone alongside Ron Moody. Mackintosh then produced another revival in 1994, directed by Sam Mendes. The most recent revival of *Oliver!* starring Samantha Barks hit London's West End in 2009.

About the Director

Executive Producer and Artistic Director **David Armstrong** will direct this perennial classic at The 5th, where he most recently directed *Hairspray in Concert*. Armstrong recently made his Broadway debut as the director of *Scandalous: The Life and Trials of Aimee Semple McPherson* (which had its pre-Broadway engagement at The 5th Avenue Theatre as *Saving Aimee* under Armstrong's direction). Since his appointment in 2000, Armstrong has guided The 5th Avenue to a position as one of the nation's leading musical theater companies, acclaimed for both its development and production of new works and its innovative stagings of classic musicals. As a director, he has created memorable 5th Avenue productions of *Candide*, *Hello, Dolly!*, *Sweeney Todd*, *White Christmas*, *Hair*, *Mame*, *A Little Night Music*, *The Secret Garden*, *Anything Goes*, *Company*, *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Pippin*, *Vanities*, and *Yankee Doodle Dandy!*

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Armstrong's direction and choreography have been seen in New York, Los Angeles and at many leading regional theaters including The Kennedy Center, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Ordway Center, Cincinnati Playhouse, St. Louis Rep, ACT Theater, Ford's Theater and Paper Mill Playhouse. As a writer, he has created the books for The 5th's world premiere musical *Yankee Doodle Dandy!*, as well as several musicals for Theatreworks USA including *A Christmas Carol*, which ran Off-Broadway at the Lucille Lortel Theatre. His Cole Porter revue, *Hot N' Cole*, which he devised and directed, has been produced by scores of theaters throughout America.

About the Choreographer

Bob Richard returns to The 5th Avenue Theatre where he has previously choreographed hit productions of *The Music Man*, *West Side Story*, *On the Town*, and *Cabaret*, among others. His work has been seen on Broadway in *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!: The Musical!*. Additionally, he has choreographed for such television shows and events as *LazyTown* with Turner Network Television, *The Tonight Show*, *The Today Show*, and *The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade*. He has choreographed all over the country at theaters including North Shore Music Theatre, The Old Globe Theatre, Theatre Under the Stars, and the Ordway Performing Arts Center. He has been the resident choreographer at Sacramento Music Circus for the last 14 years, staging more than 30 productions. He is the founding artistic director of The American Musical Theatre Dance Company.

About the Music Director

Joel Fram returns to The 5th Avenue Theatre where he was music director for recent hit productions of *The Pirates of Penzance* and *The Music Man*, among many others. Fram has worked extensively in New York and London, conducting the Broadway productions of *Wicked*, *Sweet Smell of Success*, *The Music Man*, *James Joyce's The Dead*, *Jumpers*, *Cats*, and *Scandalous: The Life and Trials of Aimee Semple McPherson* (a musical that had its pre-Broadway engagement at The 5th as *Saving Aimee*); the West End company of *Wicked*; and *Forbidden Broadway* at the Menier Chocolate Factory. He created musical arrangements for the ballet *Pictures from an Exhibition* for both the Young Vic and Sadler's Wells Theatre. U.S. national tours and regional credits include *Falsettos*, *Cats*, *A...My Name is Alice* (cast album) and the world premiere of two Andrew Lippa musicals, *The Little Princess* (cast album) and *John & Jen* (cast album). At New York's Symphony Space, he created the award-winning *New Voices* concert series and, for Stephen Sondheim's 75th birthday, he co-produced and curated the 12-hour marathon *Wall to Wall Stephen Sondheim*.

About the Creative Team

The design team for *Oliver!* includes scenic and lighting designer **Tom Sturge**, costume designer **Sarah Nash Gates**, hair and makeup designer **Mary Pyanowski**, and orchestrator **Bruce Monroe**. Also on the team are associate lighting designer **Christian DeAngelis**, assistant set designer **Katherine Stromberger**, second assistant set designer and second assistant lighting designer **Tristan Roberson**, and costume design assistant **Michelle Terese Grimm**. Additional staff includes assistant directors **Pauls Macs** and **Mathew**

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Wright, assistant choreographer **Trina Mills**, associate music director **Christopher Littlefield**, and dialect coach **Gin Hammond**.

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*, has been announced for a Broadway debut in February of 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 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.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: This winter The 5th Avenue Theatre presents a singing and dancing spectacular not to be missed: Lionel Bart's beloved classic, ***Oliver!***, the holiday treat that will have audiences saying "Please sir, I want some more." The iconic musical returns to the celebrated 5th Avenue stage for the first time in 20 years, and will feature stunning costumes, dazzling sets, and a massive local cast of 66 (including 36 youngsters). Based on the classic Charles Dickens novel, ***Oliver!*** is filled with memorable tunes including "Who Will Buy?", "I'd Do Anything," and "As Long As He Needs Me." ***Oliver!*** features direction by **David Armstrong** and will star **David Pichette** as Fagin, **Grayson Smith** as the Artful Dodger, **Hans Altwies** as Bill Sikes, and **Merideth Kaye Clark** as Nancy. *Oliver Twist* will be played by **Jack Fleischmann** and **Mark Jeffrey James Weber** at alternating performances.

WHEN: *Previews: November 29-December 4, 2013*
Opening Night: Thursday, December 5, 2013 (press night)
Closing Performance: Tuesday, December 31, 2013

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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 \$40.50) 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 2013/14 season co-sponsors ArtsFund, US Bank, and Safeco Insurance, official airline Delta Air Lines, and media sponsor *The Seattle Times*. Additional thanks to our production sponsor: the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as our supporting sponsors Peoples Bank and Macy's.

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