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Broadway's Rufus Bonds, Jr. to replace Norm Lewis in The 5th Avenue Theatre's Production of *Man of La Mancha*

*Bonds steps into the iconic role of Don Quixote following
the departure of Norm Lewis.*

(Wednesday, September 14, 2016 – SEATTLE, WA) Broadway's **Rufus Bonds, Jr.** will be tilting at windmills on **The 5th Avenue Theatre** stage when he takes over the role of Don Quixote in ***Man of La Mancha***. Bonds was recently seen as Porgy in *The Gershwins' Porgy & Bess* in London's West End, and was a member of the original Broadway casts of *RENT* and *Parade*. This new production is the first of The 5th Avenue Theatre's 2016/17 season and also features **Don Darryl Rivera** as Sancho and **Nova Payton** as Aldonza with direction by **Allison Narver** and choreography by **Maria Torres**.

Norm Lewis has withdrawn due to scheduling conflicts. "I was faced with a very sudden conflict," Lewis said. "This offer was unexpected and my struggle with the final decision was not an easy one, knowing the disappointment this would cause audiences in Seattle, to whom I must send my deepest apologies. I feel only gratitude to The 5th for its support and understanding, and wish the production the best."

"Rufus Bonds, Jr. is an outstanding and talented performer," said 5th Avenue Executive Producer and Artistic Director **David Armstrong**. "I have long been an admirer of his work, and we are thrilled to give Seattle audiences the opportunity to see him in this iconic role. While we are saddened by Lewis' departure, we understand the difficult circumstances and we are fortunate to now count Bonds as a member of our company."

Man of La Mancha runs **October 7-30, 2016** (press night Thursday, October 13, 2016) at **The 5th Avenue Theatre** (1308 5th Avenue, Seattle). For single tickets (starting at \$29) and information, please visit www.5thavenue.org, call the Box Office at (206) 625-1900 or visit the Box Office at 1308 5th Avenue in downtown Seattle.

Rufus Bonds, Jr. is a versatile award-winning actor, director and writer who has performed some of musical theater's most challenging roles to great acclaim, recently sweeping London as Porgy in *The Gershwins' Porgy & Bess*. He made his Broadway debut as a member of the cast of *RENT*, eventually taking over the role of Tom Collins. He was nominated for a Drama Desk Award for his performance as Tom Conley in Hal Prince's

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Parade—a role he reprised in 2013 in Los Angeles, winning him an Ovation Award. Bonds has starred in many national tours with roles including Mufasa in *The Lion King*, John in *Miss Saigon* and Mister in *The Color Purple*. He received an NAACP Award for his work in *The Color Purple*. Regionally he has performed as Jim in *Big River* at the Mark Taper Forum and was featured in *Duke Ellington's Sacred Music* at Carnegie Hall. His directing projects have included *Tarzan*, *The Wiz*, *Into the Woods* and *The Wizard of Oz*. He is also a Eugene O'Neill Semi-Finalist for his play *The Sisters of Rosewall High*.

One of the most epic and enduring musicals of all time, *Man of La Mancha* is a glorious affirmation of the unyielding resilience of the human spirit that will leave audiences breathless. Inspired by one of the greatest novels in Western literature, *Man of La Mancha* enters the mind and world of the mad knight Don Quixote as he pursues his quest for the impossible dream. In a tale told by Cervantes himself in defense of his life's work, Quixote is, against all odds, a man who sees good and innocence in a world filled with darkness and despair. Featuring stirring classic songs including "The Impossible Dream," *Man of La Mancha* is a multi-Tony Award®-winning theatrical masterpiece that blurs the line between dreams and reality in a powerful celebration of the imagination.

About The 5th Avenue Theatre

The nonprofit 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 2001, 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 nonprofit theater company attracts an annual attendance of more than 300,000, including over 20,000 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 that serve over 83,000 youth each year. For more information about The 5th Avenue Theatre, its season and its programs, please visit www.5thavenue.org

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