

# EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT REPORT

## 2023/24 SEASON

The 2023/24 season brought a meaningful period of growth and development for The 5th Avenue Theatre's Education & Engagement department. We focused on enhancing and deepening our existing core programming to ensure our work best serves our community and aligns with our values as part of The 5th's mission to nurture, advance, and celebrate all aspects of the great art form: the musical (see page #1 to read about our Education & Engagement department's approach to programming).

To meet the evolving needs of our local schools, we tailored program offerings, like Career Day, to connect working theater professionals with students. We implemented new roles in our Rising Star Project for students to grow their skills in dramaturgy, accessibility, and community engagement professions in addition to our established offerings in theater design and technology, performance, artistic leadership, and arts administration.

We commissioned local artists to create a New Works musical for the Educational Touring Company program titled *Songs of the Moon: Fantastical Folktales from Asia*, and offered preview performances to community groups, educators, and students across Washington state to welcome their feedback as part of the development process before the full-scale touring production's world premiere in the 2024/25 season.

**In total, our department produced 422 hours of programming across 110+ events, engaged over 1,700 program participants, and hired about 60 teaching artists/guest artists/facilitators across the 2023/24 season. Our dramaturgical "Inside the Musical" Guide resources enhanced the experience of over 135,000 people who attended The 5th's mainstage productions.**

Through the new initiatives of our Community Day Programming, we fostered strong connections and are proud of the positive impact Drag Community Day and Khmer Community Day held in celebration of the drag, Khmer, and musical theater communities.

We expanded our professional development events for educators and teaching artists by launching a new partnership with Washington Thespians and continuing to serve as a lead organizer in the Seattle Theatre Education Coalition's annual professional development day. We are proud of connecting with 120+ educators and teaching artists representing a wide range of school districts across King county and beyond.

Please read on for details about some of our highlighted initiatives and work from the 2023/24 Season.



# OUR PROGRAM VALUES

It is our goal to provide programming which will further advance our art form and nurture deep community connections with The 5th, creating pathways for those interested in becoming arts sector employees, advocates, and/or ambassadors.

With our key demographic between the ages of 14 and 21, we are supporting emerging colleagues and collaborators with programming that connects to our mission, while centering our commitment to anti-racism and anti-oppression. Our approach is founded on the idea of “Engagement,” a methodology which emphasizes collaboration, shared learning, and intentional partnership, rather than “Outreach,” which traditionally seeks to teach communities a specific belief system, without understanding or appreciating the expertise that already exists elsewhere.

**Our programs use five guiding principles when either considering new initiatives or changes to existing initiatives. We work to ensure that each program:**

- **Is founded in the roots and evolution of musical theater as an art form.**
- **Helps us deepen the awareness and understanding of the work we do both on and off stage.**
- **Ensures that we are in collaboration with community and highlights shared expertise.**
- **Is founded in culturally responsive principles and is accessible both programmatically and fiscally.**
- **Allows us to create pathways for future engagement, supporting The 5th’s goal to welcome all artists, communities, and audience members.**



PHOTO CREDIT: YOUTH IN FOCUS

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# RISING STAR PROJECT

Rising Star Project celebrated its 13th year with the exhilarating production of *Rising Star Project: Something's Afoot*. **Fifty-five** students interested in theater design & technology, arts administration, artistic leadership, and performance collaborated with teams of their peers, learning about the process of mounting a production at The 5th Avenue Theatre.

Students worked in tandem with adult mentors to recreate The 5th Avenue Theatre's professional production of *Something's Afoot*. Our student cohort this year represented **39** schools across **27** cities in the Puget Sound region.

After applications, auditions, and interviews in October and November of 2023, student teams began work in our offices, rehearsal halls, and shops in February of 2024. **Seven weeks of rehearsal** culminated in a **3-day run** with **4 performances** from April 11-13, 2024, including an exciting student matinee performance. The *Rising Star Project: Something's Afoot* cohort shared their skills with **2,071** audience members. Over the course of the performance run, The 5th was able to offer **687** complimentary tickets and **342** reduced-price tickets to members of our community.

Rising Star Project has a unique and one-of-its-kind emphasis on direct mentorship for students from working industry professionals. In our end-of-program survey, **75% of student participants** estimated that they spent **75% or more of their time in the program working directly with either their mentor or another theater professional**.

Mentors drew upon their own professional journeys to teach students directly applicable professional skills and provide guidance on how to navigate the theater industry. Rising Star Project mentors showcased their dedication to supporting the future generation of theater leaders, practitioners, and advocates through intentional networking, and they provided a variety of opportunities for students to directly apply the knowledge and leadership skills that they gained.



PHOTO CREDIT: CESAR CABRERA



PHOTO CREDIT: CESAR CABRERA

“

I feel like I grew personally and artistically. This show really pushed me out of my comfort zone and I only became better for it. I also got the opportunity to make friends and work with wildly talented people...It was extremely fun!

—Rising Star Project Student



PHOTO CREDIT: CESAR CABRERA

“

After talking to the Props Artisan in the prop shop, it really solidified that I want to do what she is doing: being a prop artisan for a large theater that does large musical productions so that I can spend all my time making interesting and different types of props.

—Rising Star Project Student

“

Artistically, I feel so much more confident in my abilities. Before RSP, I was unsure if I'd be up to the challenge and be able to cope with the nerves of being on stage at the 5th, but now I know I'm capable of overcoming fears like that and can trust in my skills and abilities much more confidently. I'm really grateful for that.

—Rising Star Project Student



PHOTO CREDIT: CESAR CABRERA

# EDUCATIONAL TOURING COMPANY



PHOTO CREDIT: SHANNA PAXTON PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTO CREDIT: SHANNA PAXTON PHOTOGRAPHY

“ I think this is a super awesome show and I am really enthusiastic about the Asian American population being represented through musical theater!!  
—Audience Member ”

The Fifth Avenue team spent the past year developing a new musical for the Educational Touring Company. We commissioned local artists Maggie Lee and Anastasia L. Workman, who created *Songs of the Moon: Fantastical Folktales from Asia*, which follows the journey of three Asian American students who are preparing for the mid-Autumn Harvest Festival.

In fall 2023 we held an internal workshop for the creators to explore the materials with actors in the room, and then kicked off preview performances in spring 2024. We served a total of **105 audience members** throughout Olympia, Richland, and Seattle. Audience members laughed and cheered alongside our performers and raved at the illustrative storytelling.

**Through providing preview performances in the development process, our team was able to gain valuable feedback on the materials prior to our launching the full tour in 2025.** The feedback will be incorporated into the next version of the script, and allows us to more intentionally build educational and engagement programming and resources for the show.

We look forward to launching the world premiere of *Songs of the Moon: Fantastical Folktales from Asia* in spring 2025 with a full touring production. We anticipate reaching 20,000 students, educators, and community members across Washington state and parts of Oregon with this program next season.

# FRIDAYS @ THE 5TH

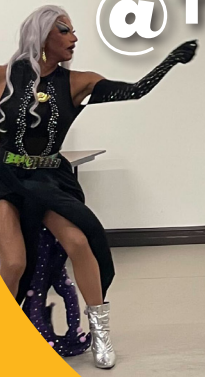


PHOTO CREDIT: EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT STAFF

## Our Fridays @ The 5th program engaged with a total of 204 student participants throughout the 2023/24 Season.

Fridays @ The 5th provides high school students ages 14-19 the opportunity to learn from professionals in the industry and grow their own skills through a series of pre-show workshops, a shared dinner, and by attending musical theater performances together.

Our student subscription packages were so popular that we expanded to offer two Fridays @ The 5th dates for the majority of the 2023/24 season!

We received **57 student subscribers** and approximately **11 companion subscribers**. Companion subscriptions allow parents or guardians the opportunity to attend a show on the same night as their student subscriber.

We hosted students from all over Seattle and **35** other cities, including students who joined us from three different states!

### 2022/23 Season Fridays @ The 5th workshop content included the following:

- *1776: Text Analysis and Life on Tour* with Dawn Cantwell and Ryan Cantwell
- *Disney's The Little Mermaid: Werk the Stage* with Queen Andrew
- *Cambodian Rock Band: Khmer Dance Traditions* with Marat Tun Ordonez and Lisaya Touch
- *Irving Berlin's White Christmas: Movement + Acting* with Maggie Darago and Jimmy Shields
- *Something's Afoot: Cracking the Characterization Case* with Ashley Lanyon and Harter Clingman
- *Spring Awakening: Vocal Techniques* with Eric Bradler and Justin Tran
- *Clue Live on Stage: Storytelling* with Donte Felder and Naomi True

“ My daughter loved it! She said the exercises were all fun, engaging and informative and she enjoyed the show, too!

—Fridays @ The 5th Parent

# CAREER DAYS

Our new Career Day program is quickly proving to be in high demand with local high schools and career readiness organizations across King County. Participating students visit The 5th and receive a Musical Theater Careers 101 workshop, a tour of our production spaces and conversation with our production department, and a speed networking lunch, where students connect with staff members who represent a wide range of creative, technical, and administrative jobs—potential career paths in the arts.



PHOTO CREDIT: EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT STAFF

Due to popular demand, we expanded our Career Day Program in the 2023/24 season and provided **5** Career Days to **4** schools, serving a total of **169** students.

## Our Career Day program includes the following:

- **Musical Theater Careers 101 workshop** for students to develop a foundational understanding of the different career options in the arts and how their interests and skills can translate to a range of career opportunities in theater
- **Tour of The 5th Avenue Theatre spaces** to experience behind-the-scenes knowledge of the diverse career paths in the arts
- **Speed Networking lunch** to interact with theater arts administrative staff, creative team members, artists, and union members and receive opportunities to ask questions about their career paths, experiences, or advice
- **Closing Reflection**, inviting students to reflect on one way they can commit to advocating for or engaging with the arts in their lives, whether it's as a future arts worker or a patron and supporter of the arts

By continuing our tradition of educating students on the full scope of career opportunities available in the world of theater, we expanded the students' perspectives on what might be possible for them. Many students were unaware of the variety of jobs in theater and how those jobs support the work that we put on stage. After Career Days, students leave with a fuller understanding and appreciation for all aspects of theatrical work. Students were excited to experience the actual behind-the-scenes workings of The 5th Avenue Theatre and connect with staff members from a diverse range of arts positions, and we look forward to seeing them explore their own futures in theater.

“

I felt like I experienced something that I really enjoyed...I got to learn more about future applications of my hobbies, which made me feel better about my life after, or even during, high school.

— Career Day Participant

”

# ENOUGH!

## PLAYS TO END GUN VIOLENCE



Credit: Photos of youth performers in *Enough! Plays to End Gun Violence* at Seattle Children's Theatre captured by Tall L and Zeppelin, Youth in Focus student photographers.

This year's resulting plays, performed by 10 students from 10 schools representing five PNW cities, brought these important accounts to life. The titles included:

- *A Call for Help by Pepper Fox (directed by The 5th's Jay Santos) tells the story of how several 911 operators' night takes a disturbing turn as they assist callers during a shooting.*
- *The Smiles Behind by Niarra C. Bell*
- *The Matter at Hand by Valentine Wulf*
- *A Disorderly House by Sam Lee Victor (directed by The 5th's Bill Berry) shows a pair of grieving parents trying to reconcile their beliefs about who their daughter was as they go through her belongings.*
- *No Prospering Weapons by Justin C. Washington*
- *Lightning Strike by Amanda Fagan*

The plays aren't just for a teen audience; they resonate with a wide range of people, "which is what good theater does," Hannah Smith, a fifteen year old student actor in *Lightning Strike* and *The Matter at Hand*, told TeenTix Blog. Importantly, *Enough!* is an avenue for youth, for whom school shootings and other forms of gun violence are unfortunately common phenomena, to use theater storytelling to express their realities and advocate for the changes they want to see.

**On November 6, audiences gathered at theaters across the country, including at a co-presentation by The 5th Avenue Theatre and Seattle Children's Theatre held at Seattle Children's Theatre, to hear short plays written by teenagers in *Enough! Plays to End Gun Violence*. This program is a unified voice that speaks to the impacts of gun violence on teens and society at large. The nationwide reading program selects six pieces each year from young playwrights' submissions to be performed for one night only.**

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

We produced **2 professional development workshops** throughout the 2023/24 season, **servicing 122 educators, teaching artists, and/or youth arts workers!**

In October, we partnered with Washington Thespians to host the largest Professional Development and Student Leadership Day for theater arts educators and high school students in Washington state. Sixty-four students and twenty-nine educators gathered to attend workshops designed to further develop and nurture their theatrical skill sets.



PHOTO CREDIT: BARKSDALE JONES PHOTOGRAPHY



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We rounded out the school year with the 2nd annual **Seattle Theatre Education Coalition Professional Development Day** (in partnership with the Office of Arts & Culture's Creative Advantage Program, Seattle Public School's Visual & Performing Arts department, Seattle Rep, Intiman Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, Jet City Improv) and presented a free day of workshops hosted at The 5th that invited educators and teaching artists to reflect on how we foster brave, empowering, and joyful spaces for our students.

# INSIDE THE MUSICAL GUIDES

Our team curated and developed seven “Inside the Musical” Guides for our self-produced shows in the 2023/24 season. These dramaturgical guides offer supplementary curriculum for audience members of all ages, and contain educational content, articles, interactive activities, opportunities for reflection, and resources based on the content and themes of the show. Our “Inside the Musical” Guides are created in collaboration with our marketing and graphics team, and also provide opportunities for our staff and guest artists to showcase the wealth of knowledge that they hold in various theatrical realms and topics. Take a look at some of our favorite articles, and read more about “Inside the Musical” Guides on our [website](#).

**INSIDE THE MUSICAL GUIDE: THE DIVINER: A PROLIC DRAG QUEEN'S INFLUENCE ON URSULA THE SEA WITCH**

This guide features a vibrant illustration of Ursula the Sea Witch with tentacles and bubbles. It includes a photograph of a drag queen performer and text discussing the influence of drag culture on the character of Ursula.

**INSIDE THE MUSICAL GUIDE: JOHN LENNON**

This guide features a black and white photograph of John Lennon playing the piano. The text explores his life, music, and the impact of his death. It includes a section titled "SUSTAINING THE CONVERSATION" with reflective questions for the audience.

**SUSTAINING THE CONVERSATION**

You experience the show, reflect on the following questions:

- Who do you most closely identify with? How do you understand and feel kinship with their experiences differently?
- How do you think you would have reacted if you were in the same situation as John Lennon?
- How do you think you would have reacted if you were in the same situation as John Lennon?

**HOW MANY PEOPLE DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE A MUSICAL?**

Do you know that you can play an instrument in making the production of Spring Awakening?

- 22 CAST
- 19 CREATIVE TEAM
- 51 PROPS
- 6 STAGE MANAGERS & PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS
- 4 AUDITION CASTING
- 6 HAIR & MAKEUP & WARDROBE
- 16 SETS
- 6 SOUND
- 10 COSTUMES
- 40 USHERS
- 7 LIGHTING

**+YOU!**

UP TO 1,886 PEOPLE CAN ATTEND EACH PERFORMANCE

**Winter Holidays**

By Ben Pickett

This guide explores the history and traditions of winter holidays, including Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa. It features festive illustrations of holiday decorations and food.

**ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS**

This guide introduces the creative team behind the production, including the writers, composers, and performers. It features portraits of the contributors and their bios.

# SHOW TALKS

with **THE FIFTH AVENUE**  
THEATRE

In the 2023/24 season, we transitioned Show Talks into a completely live event and offered **five in-person Show Talks**. This season's Show Talks were in collaboration with Seattle Public Library Central Branch and Wing Luke Museum. Show Talks further explore a topic or theme of a show and offer audiences a dramaturgical deep-dive, similar to what performers and production team members receive.



PHOTO CREDIT: BARKSDALE JONES PHOTOGRAPHY



## OUR SHOW TALKS FEATURED:

- Kelley Jordan, Hair and Makeup Designer for *Disney's The Little Mermaid* demonstrated what it takes to create a personalized wig for characters.
- The cast of *Cambodian Rock Band*, who spoke with community members about the power of the production and its music.
- Local community members Terrance Proctor (member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.), Ms. Melba Ayco (NW Tap Connection), Lauren Robles (Grupo Folklorico Citali), and James Rocco (Co-director and Choreographer of *Irving Berlin's White Christmas*) performed culturally-grounded dances and held a panel discussion on various forms of foot-heavy dances, inspired by the classical tap showcased in *The 5th's* production.
- Rising Star Project alumni and current mentees shared insight into how the program has positively impacted their personal and professional lives. Featuring: Ania Briggs, Shelby Willis, Malina Sichel, Elizabeth Conlon, Eyual Degaga, and Miranda Quintanilla (our Education & Engagement Coordinator).
- An immersive look into the dramaturgy of *Spring Awakening*. Beth Pollack walked audiences through the content of the show and the inspirations behind the writing, and Guest Artist Justin Tran provided a breakdown of the music and lyrics.

# COMMUNITY TICKET PROGRAM

“ Our students (and chaperones) had an afternoon that they will never forget. The vast majority of our students (32 4th-9th graders) and most of the adults in our group had never experienced a [Musical Theater] performance. Without the generosity of The 5th Avenue Theatre’s Community Partner Program, we would have never been able to provide such an amazing experience for our students. In the weeks leading up to the performance, our students learned about theater etiquette and we talked about what they were going to see and what to look for. They were so excited and ready for the show, but nothing could have prepared them...so magical!

—Community Ticket Program Organization Participant”

It is with the generous help of our Show Sponsors, Donors, Front of House Staff/ Volunteers, Box Office, and Guest Services Staff that we are able to run this program smoothly. A deep THANK YOU to all who have supported this initiative to share our favorite art form, musical theater, with the Greater Seattle-Tacoma Community.

Through our Community Ticket Program (formally known as Access for All), The 5th Avenue Theatre partners with local service organizations to provide members of the larger community tickets to our productions at no cost, while engaging them in educational programs or discussions to provide a deeper and more meaningful theater-going experience.

This season we grew our community ticket program list by **32 organizations and provided 3,197 free tickets, welcoming at least 1,105 first-time patrons to experience a 5th Avenue Theatre musical production.**

Organizations we currently provide tickets to serve the following variety of populations:

- Houseless individuals, teens, and families
- Seniors, retirees, veterans
- LGBTQIA+ youth and communities
- Global Majority youth, individuals, and families
- Recovering addicts
- Post-incarceration Reentry community
- Disabled and/or Neurodivergent Communities; Behavior Health Support Communities



PHOTO CREDIT: EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT STAFF

# GLOBAL MAJORITY NIGHT

“

This was a beautifully organized pre-show event. Love and appreciation to the team. I felt welcomed, learned about new anchors in the community and I cannot thank you enough for making my evening possible. #heartful

”

—Global Majority Night Attendee

We are excited to close our second season with the Global Majority Nights programming. This event is a space open to all, intentionally set in the Producer’s Club and co-hosted with a fellow arts organization whose staff and/or participants identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color. “Global Majority” refers to non-white communities that make up 85% of the world’s population and therefore are the global majority. This naming convention is a first step to recognizing the power of white supremacy and its history not only in our institution but also around the globe. The 5th Avenue Theatre recognizes that our Global Majority community members have historically been met with elitism and exclusion from our theater. We believe we have to change. We are asking ourselves what belonging truly means to us and how we can best be of service to the abundant vibrancy of Seattle.

### **Our partner organizations for the 2023/24 season included:**

- Red Eagle Soaring
- Pork-Filled Productions
- Ese Teatro
- Seda Iranian Theatre Ensemble
- Pratidhwani
- Hansberry Project

Each of these organizations came into our space and presented their works, their organizations, and their beautiful art with patrons in a pre-show presentation. We are excited to welcome these organizations into our space and continue to find creative ways to partner in the future.

# COMMUNITY DAYS

Community Day is an initiative to open our doors and build connective tissue between The 5th and various groups throughout the Pacific Northwest in an intentional way. To ensure that the event and programs reach the intended community, we build strong foundational partnerships with organizations and/or community activists from those designated groups. During the 2023/24 season, we held two amazing community days.

The first Community Day was “DRAG ME TO THE SEA,” in tandem with our production of *Disney’s The Little Mermaid*, and was in partnership with Local Drag artists.

Queen Andrew Scott worked with us to curate multiple events that day, including a Drag Queen Story Time and a late night drag show hosted by The Triple Door.



PHOTO CREDIT: THE 5TH STAFF



PHOTO CREDIT: TEENTIX AND THE 5TH STAFF

“Khmer Community Day” was held to honor the history and context of our co-production of *Cambodian Rock Band*. This event was part of a broader campaign to center and create greater access to theater for the Khmer community in the region. That coalition involved several Khmer-based community organizations, including KCSKC (Khmer Community of South King County), The Khmer Alumni Association, and The Khmer Advocacy and Advancement Group (KhAAG) in partnership with The 5th Avenue Theatre, ACT Contemporary Theatre, and with the support of The Wing Luke Museum, as well as the international band, Dengue Fever. This event included discounted and free tickets for Khmer community members, transportation support to and from the theater, Khmer language interpretation, and community group performance opportunities, as well as wonderful Khmer cuisine staples.