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Cast Announced for the World Premiere of New Musical *Afterwords*, Debuting at The 5th Avenue Theatre this Spring

April 29 – May 21, 2022

Music and Lyrics by Zoe Sarnak

Book by Emily Kaczmarek

Directed by Adrienne Campbell-Holt

Choreographed by Ebony Williams

Music Supervision by Matt Perri

(Tuesday, March 15, 2022—SEATTLE) Casting was announced today for **The 5th Avenue Theatre's** world premiere production of the captivating new musical ***Afterwords***, which debuts this Spring from April 29 – May 21. Now in rehearsals, The 5th welcomes back to its stage for *Afterwords* **Andi Alhadeff** (The 5th: *Ragtime*, *RENT*) as Kali, **Mari Nelson** (Broadway: *Guys and Dolls*; The 5th/ACT: *Urinetown*) as Lydia, **Brandon O'Neill** (Broadway: *Disney's Aladdin*, The 5th: *Rock of Ages*) as Jimmy, **Saxton Jay Walker** (The 5th: *Grease*) as Franklin, and **Kirsten deLohr Helland** (The 5th: *The Sound of Music*; Seattle Rep: *Lizard Boy*) as Kali's Voice 1. Making their 5th Avenue Theatre debuts are Broadway's **Kerstin Anderson** (*My Fair Lady*) as Simone and **Anastacia McCleskey** (*Waitress*) as Jo, **Timothy Michael Keller** (Village Theatre: *Jesus Chris Superstar*) as Kali's Voice 2, and nationally recognized dancers and movement artists **Ashley Menestrina** and **Cara Diaz** as The Process.

Afterwords is the 24th new musical produced by The 5th Avenue Theatre and features music and lyrics by **Zoe Sarnak** and a book by **Emily Kazmarek**, with direction by **Adrienne Campbell-Holt**, choreography by **Ebony Williams**, and music supervision by **Matt Perri**.

The cast also features **Eliza Palasz** (Understudy for Kali and Simone), **Kataka "Kat" Corn** (Understudy for Jo and Kali's Voice), **Cheyenne Casebier** (Understudy for Lydia), **Eric Polani Jensen** (Understudy for Jimmy), **Andre Brown** (Understudy for Franklin), and **Lisa Kwak** (Understudy for The Process).

Afterwords plays **April 29 to May 21, 2022** at The 5th Avenue Theatre (1308 5th Avenue in Downtown Seattle). Single tickets are on sale now can be purchased over the phone at **206-625-1900**, in person at the **Box Office at 1308 5th Avenue**, or online at www.5thavenue.org.

"We are very excited to be at the helm of *Afterwords'* next step in development," said The 5th Avenue Theatre's Producing Artistic Director **Bill Berry**. "Watching this evocative new musical grow and change over the years, to now have a fully mounted production on our stage is the most rewarding part of this process."

Afterwords was produced as a musical radio play as part of The 5th Avenue Theatre's 2020/21 Digital Season and was workshopped in 2019, following workshops in 2017 and 2018 at Village Theatre. A breathtaking story about the power of art to heal, *Afterwords* is a captivating new musical fusing pop, rock, and modern indie-folk to create a revelatory and soulful new score. Notes scribbled on paper, the stroke of a paintbrush against a canvas, a growing melody played on the piano... *Afterwords* is the story of the art we make from the love that shapes us. Following the sudden loss of their mother, sisters Kali and Simone find themselves once again living in their childhood home together. When they decide to rent out the attic, into their lives walks Jo, a war reporter lost in her own grief. As the women share their stories they discover unexpected truths, helping each other pass through their struggles and a dazzling mosaic of intersecting lives reveals itself.

About the Cast

Andi Alhadeff (she/her) joins the cast as Kali. She is a Seattle based artist who feels incredibly grateful to be on the journey with this creative family. Telling this story, in this space, at this time with this team is the greatest gift and convergence of purpose and passion. If you are grieving, she hopes you find resonance and healing here. Some favorite credits include *Ragtime* (Emma Goldman) and *RENT* (Joanne) at The 5th, and *Indecent* (Chana) at Seattle Rep.

Kerstin Anderson (she/her) makes her debut at The 5th as Simone. A Vermont native, Anderson made her professional debut as Maria in *The Sound of Music* touring the US. She made her Broadway debut in LCT's *My Fair Lady*, where she played over 80 performances as Eliza Doolittle. Other credits include *Unknown Soldier* (Playwrights Horizon), *Row* (Audible), and *Doubt* (WCP). She can be heard on Ryan Scott Oliver's albums *Darling* and *Future Demons*, Alex Ratner's *Tyrell*, Ethan Carlson's *Her Sound*, and the Original Cast Album of *Unknown Soldier*.

Anastacia McCleskey joins the cast as Jo. She was recently on Broadway in *Waitress* (Nurse Norma) and the revival of *Caroline or Change*. She recurs on *New Amsterdam* (Dry. Phylicia Elder), *The Good Fight* (Opal), and appeared in *Annie Live* (Sophie, Mrs. Greer, Perkins). She has been featured in seven Broadway hits, one West End hit, off-Broadway hits, and sung with/provided back-up vocals for many artists. She has been nominated for a Helen Hayes Award, Alliance Award, and an Audelco Award.

Mari Nelson (she/her) returns to The 5th Avenue Theatre as *Lydia*. She began her professional career in The New York Shakespeare Festival's *Twelfth Night* at The Delacorte. Nelson originated the role of Elizabeth in John Guare's *Six Degrees of Separation*. Her Broadway credits include *Guys and Dolls* (Sarah Brown) and *Translations* (Moirra). She has performed regionally at Alley, Paper Mill, Center Stage, Hartford Stage, Intiman, Seattle Rep, ACT, The 5th, Village, and Seattle Shakespeare Company. She is the recipient of three Gregory Awards: Best Actress in a Play (2017), Best Supporting Performance in a Musical and in a Play (2019), and is a graduate of The Juilliard School.

Brandon O'Neill (he/him) returns to The 5th as Jimmy. Select 5th Avenue Theatre credits include: *Rock of Ages*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Carousel*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *RENT*, and *Guys and Dolls*. He was seen on Broadway in *Aladdin* (Original Broadway Cast), *A Bronx Tale* (first replacement), and *Aladdin - Live from the West End* (2022 film). Select regional credits include: *Dracula*, *Oslo*, *Pride & Prejudice*, *A View from the Bridge*, *Assassins*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Beatrice and Benedict*, and *Sondheim at the Pops*. He is the Voice of Crow/Uldren Sov in *Bungie's Destiny*.

Saxton Jay Walker (he/him) joins the cast as Franklin. Walker hails from Seattle, Washington and is excited to make his return to The 5th Avenue Theatre stage. Graduating from Cornish College of the Arts

and London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts with a bachelor's degree in Writing, Directing, and Acting in Film & Theater, this now New York resident spends his time performing, creating music, and being the best sky diving breakdancer this side of the Mississippi.

Kirsten deLohr Helland (she/her) returns to The 5th Avenue Theatre stage as Kali's Voice 1. Her previous credits at The 5th include *The Sound of Music* (Maria), *Grease* (Rizzo), *Oklahoma!* (Ado Annie), *Elf* (Jovie), and *Afterwords* (Digital Season). Other regional credits include *Les Misérables*, *Trails*, *Afterwords* (Beta Series) at Village Theatre, and the Seattle Rep/TheatreWorks Silicon Valley/Diversions Theatre productions of *Lizard Boy*. Film credits include *Laggies*. Helland is co-creator of *The Lamplighter* (with Justin Huertas and Sara Porkalob) which was presented as part of The 5th's 20/21 Digital Season.

Timothy Michael Keller (he/him) makes his debut at The 5th Avenue Theatre as Kali's Voice 2. He has starred yearly as Jack Skellington in the Can Can/Triple Door production of *This is Halloween* since 2010. He has worked with Village Theatre, Lyric Opera Northwest, and Puget Sound concert opera, and has been a featured vocalist for Seattle Rock Orchestra since 2009.

Ashley Menestrina (she/her) makes her debut at The 5th as The Process. She is a movement artist, performer, teacher, and choreographer. Her repertoire of solo works *Always a Creature* (2015-2017), *The Human Condition: Absent Presence* (2018-current), and *Combative Echoes* (2019-current) have been performed in seven countries and received numerous awards from festival juries. *Afterwords* marks her first musical production.

Cara Diaz (she/her) makes her debut at The 5th as The Process. A storyteller who incorporates her own truth through movement, Diaz's TV/Film credits include *In the Heights*, Camila Cabello, *Law & Order*, A\$AP ROCKY, "X" Gimbal Campaign, and MiAdidas. Her commercial credits include Marriott Hotels, H&MxKENZO NYFW, De La Soul, Lululemon. Concert: Francesca Harper Project, and Alpha Omega Theatrical Dance Company.

The cast also features **Eliza Palasz** (Understudy for Kali and Simone), **Kataka "Kat" Corn** (Understudy for Jo and Kali's Voice), **Cheyenne Casebier** (Understudy for Lydia), **Eric Polani Jensen** (Understudy for Jimmy), **Andre Brown** (Understudy for Franklin), and **Lisa Kwak** (Understudy for Dancer 1 and 2).

About the Creative Team

Adrienne Campbell-Holt (*Director*) is a NYC-based director and choreographer and the Founding Artistic Director of Colt Coeur. She is the recipient of the 2018 Lucille Lortel Visionary Director Award and was a Time Warner/Women's Project Lab 2014-2016 Fellow, a recipient of the Bill Foeller Fellowship at Williamstown Theatre Festival, a Jerome Foundation/Tofte Lake Fellowship, the EST/Sloan grant, an alum of the Lincoln Center Directors Lab, and a New Georges Affiliated Artist and Audrey Resident. She has developed work with La Jolla Playhouse, the Roundabout, Playwrights Horizons, Clubbed Thumb, Rattlestick, Women's Project Theater, IAMA, New Georges, Playwrights' Center, Portland Center Stage, and the Ensemble Studio Theater. Broadway: *Dear Evan Hansen* (Associate Director). Campbell-Holt grew up in Newbury, Vermont and the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts.

Ebony Williams (*Choreographer*) A Boston native, Williams' recent choreographic credits include *Alicia Keys One Night Only* at the Apollo Theater, and Head Choreographer for Keys' most recent "Keys" Promotional Tour. She also served as the Associate Choreographer for Warner Bros. musical film *In the Heights*, as well as appearing in the film. Additional credits include Co-Choreographer for Beyoncé's "My Power" music video, Choreographer/Movement Director for Beyoncé's "Black is King,"

Associate Choreographer for the Broadway musical *Jagged Little Pill*, Co-Choreographer/Dancer for Alanis Morissette's "Forgiven" 2021 tour music video, Head Choreographer for the 2021 US Open promotional campaign, and Head Choreographer of Doja Cat's 2021 VMA's performance. Coming in 2022, Williams' choreography will be seen center stage in the highly anticipated Disney+ musical comedy film *Sneakerella*.

Matt Perri (*Music Director*) has been Music Director for The 5th Avenue Theatre's productions of *Austen's Pride*, *West Side Story*, *Rock of Ages* and is currently the Resident Music Supervisor for The 5th Avenue Theatre. His Broadway credits include *Bandstand*, *Come From Away*; *Finding Neverland*; Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*; *Scandalous*; *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (2011); *Promises, Promises* (2010); *Rock of Ages*; *White Christmas*; and *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Off-Broadway: *Cagney*. Perri also coproduced the original cast recording of *Cagney*. His television credits include *The Sound of Music Live* and *Peter Pan Live*, both on NBC; *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*; *The Late Show with David Letterman*; and *The View*. In concert, he has served as music director and performed with Bette Midler, Kristin Chenoweth, and Mario Cantone.

Afterwords features scenic design by **Carey Wong**, costume design by **Sarafina Bush**, lighting design **Robert Aguilar**, sound design by **John Shivers**, and projection design **Caite Hevner**. Additional creative team members include **Jéhan Òsanyìn** (associate director), **Katy Tabb** (associate choreographer), **Michael Nutting** (associate music director), **Taya Pyne** (costume design assistant), **Ranleigh Starling** (associate lighting designer), **Haley Parcher** (associate sound designer), and **Chris Reay** (associate projection designer), with additional casting by **Dedra D. Woods** and **Xavier Rubiano**.

Afterwords features orchestrations by **Nadia DiGiallonardo**, **Rich Mercurio**, **Zoe Sarnak**, and **Brian Usifer**.

Additional staff for *Afterwords* includes **JR Welden** (production stage manager), **Claire Stark** and **Jason Broulliard** (assistant stage managers), and **Erin B. Zatloka** (swing assistant stage manager).

About the Writers

Emily Kaczmarek (*Book*) (she/her) is an LA-based playwright, screenwriter, and librettist. Her work has been developed/produced at Second Stage Theater, American Conservatory Theater, Northern Stage, WP Theater, and Village Theatre, among others. She has been an artist in residence at SPACE on Ryder Farm, the Hermitage Artist Retreat, the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, Goodspeed Musicals, and the Orchard Project. Emily is a 2018 Jonathan Larson Grant Recipient, a National Playwrights Conference Finalist, a two-time Kleban Prize Finalist, and a Princess Grace Award Finalist. Other works include *Sam & Lizzie* (Kilroys List Honorable Mention), *Soft Target* (upcoming world premiere at the Geffen Playhouse), and *Afloat* (music and lyrics by Zoe Sarnak; WP Theater commission). As a TV writer/producer, Emily has worked on *Monsterland*, *Soulmates*, *The Staircase*, *American Gigolo*, and is currently writing a feature film for Amazon.

Zoe Sarnak (*Composer/Lyricist*) (she/her) is a NYC-based composer/lyricist and writer, Jonathan Larson Award winner, finalist for the Ebb, Kleban, and Billie Burke Ziegfeld Awards, winner of Berkie Awards for Best Musical and Best New Work for *A Crossing* at Barrington Stage, whose work has been presented by Second Stage, New York Stage & Film, The Public, Roundabout, Williamstown, The Geffen, New York Theatre Workshop, WP, MCC, 20th Century Fox, NY Times Live, BBC, The Guggenheim and many others. Upcoming work includes *Shook* (with Alexis Scheer), premiering fall 2022 at Northern Stage and additional projects including *Galileo* (with Danny Strong, Michael Weiner, Michael Mayer), *The Lonely*

Few (with Rachel Bonds), *Empire Records* (with Carol Heikkinen), *Secret Soldiers* (with Marsha Norman and Tori Sampson), *Particle Fever* (with David Henry Hwang, Bear McCreary), *Split* (with Michele Lowe), a Netflix musical film with Lauren Miller Rogen, and a musical TV show in development with Sallie Patrick.

About The 5th Avenue Theatre

The 5th Avenue Theatre is one of America's leading musical theater companies. We enrich the community we love with the art form we love—giving the Pacific Northwest a front-row seat to original powerhouse productions that go on to light up marquees and audiences all the way to Broadway. From the page to the stage, we bring passion and epic scale to every musical we create. With big talent. Bigger-than-life productions. And did we mention dazzle? As a nonprofit theater company and our region's largest performing arts employer, we spread the joy of great musicals with people of all ages across our region and state. Each year, we reach 75,000 young people through our nationally acclaimed education programs. Programs designed to develop new musicals ensure that the next generation of great musicals will be there to tell the stories that captivate tomorrow's audiences. On the national stage, we are a leading voice for the power of this art form to lift the human spirit.

For more information about The 5th Avenue Theatre, its season and its programs, please visit www.5thavenue.org.

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