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Date: May 19, 2009

Alliance Theatre Announces Staging of Innovative A Cappella Musical for 2009-10 Season

ATLANTA — The scintillating sounds of doo-wop and R&B will collide on a street corner in 1960's Brooklyn during the Alliance Theatre's production of ***Avenue X***. Award-winning composer Ray Leslee wrote the music for this revolutionary a cappella musical in which two young men search their divided community for harmony in more than just their music. Alliance Theatre Artistic Director Susan V. Booth will direct eight actors in this ambitious work that combines a variety of musical genres and rhythms to tell a compelling story of racial struggle in a New York neighborhood. The musical will run Jan. 13 – Feb. 7, 2010 on the Alliance Stage.

"*Jesus Christ Superstar GOSPEL* taught me the power of the voice in a way that defies explaining," comments Booth, referring to the 2008-09 Season hit she brought to the Alliance Stage. "To dive into a project that is pure voice—no band, just voice in song—is wildly appealing."

Avenue X examines the deep emotions, combustible tensions and human struggles of two neighborhoods separated by a street in Brooklyn. From an African-American community on one side of the street and an Italian-American neighborhood on the other emerge two young men drawn together through their love for music and a desire to compete in an amateur singing contest. They soon discover a shared dream of escaping the limitations and intense struggles of their two very race conscious communities.

"Our audience has told us loud and clear that they love musicals with story and substance," notes Booth, referring to earlier Alliance productions of *The Color Purple* (Sept. 2004) and *The Women of Brewster Place* (Sept. 2007). "*Avenue X* uses a glorious vocabulary of musical styles to tell the story of a changing community—and does so with deep heart and true harmonies."

Avenue, 2-2-2

The production encompasses a rich range of musical styles including doo-wop, rock-and-roll, R&B, Italian folk tunes, jazz and gospel. Booth continues, “We talk—a lot—about differences and unity in our city. *Avenue X* uses divergent musical styles and tightly woven harmonies to have that conversation, and as a result, the conversation sits not just in our heads, but in our hearts.”

Avenue X was first produced in 1994 at Playwrights Horizons in New York. After an extended off-Broadway run, it was staged in more than 50 theatres around the world, winning Best Musical awards in Dallas, Seattle, Austin, Los Angeles and Philadelphia where it received the Barrymore Award for Best Musical 1997.

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Set to begin its 41st season, Atlanta’s nationally acclaimed Alliance Theatre, **recipient of the 2007 Regional Theatre Tony Award®**, is the leading professional resident theatre of the Southeast, creating the powerful experience of shared theatre for diverse people on two stages for youth and adult audiences. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Susan V. Booth and Managing Director Thomas Pechar, the Alliance Theatre is **a national theatre with a local address**, reaching out annually to almost 200,000 patrons and members of the community. Known for its high artistic standards and national role in creating significant theatrical works, the Alliance launched three Tony Award-winning hits to Broadway: Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, Elton John and Tim Rice’s *Aida* and Alfred Uhry’s *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*. And, in a rare event for a regional theatre, it originated the national tour of the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. The theatre has premiered 60 works including adaptations of Carson McCullers’ *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and Pearl Cleage’s *Blues for an Alabama Sky*. Further evidence of the Alliance’s commitment to new work is found in its nationally recognized Kendeda Graduate Playwriting Competition, a cutting-edge program introducing student playwrights to professional networks while producing the world premiere of the winning student’s work. The Alliance Theatre also offers extensive education and outreach programs such as the Institute for Educators and the Collision Project for high school students. The Alliance continuously brings Atlanta the finest talent and finest art—proving once again that the Alliance is where great theatre lives. 404.733.4650 or www.alliancetheatre.org

The Alliance Theatre is a division of the Woodruff Arts Center in Atlanta, Georgia, which also includes the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, High Museum of Art, Young Audiences and the 14th Street Playhouse.