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The 5th Avenue Theatre and Village Theatre Announce Northwest by Northwest New Musical Co-Commission Recipients

(Thursday, August 26, 2021—SEATTLE) **The 5th Avenue Theatre** and **Village Theatre** announced today the three writing teams that have been co-commissioned to create new musicals as part of **Northwest by Northwest (NWxNW)**, a new musical development program, and the first collaboration between the two organizations. This unique program between the Northwest's largest producers of new musicals solicited submissions from Pacific Northwest residents of single-frame narrative photos of the Northwest, with images reflecting the robust life, experiences, and people that make up the region. The three local writing teams will write a new musical based on one photo of their choosing. Each show will receive a year-long development plan and the photographers received a \$500 prize.

The three writing teams include **Koryn Orcutt** and **Danielle Mohlman**, who selected a photograph by **Beth Easton**; **Rheanna Atendido**, who selected a photograph by **Stephen Zapantis**; and **Claudine Mboligikpelani Nako**, who selected a photograph by **Maleah Metz**. NWxNW supports these multitalented Pacific Northwest-based artists and writers by creating opportunity for cross-discipline collaboration and providing future opportunities for their Northwest stories to be told and experienced outside the region.

About the NWxNW Commissions

Untitled

By Koryn Orcutt and Danielle Mohlman
Photograph by Beth Easton

This new musical centers on seventeen-year-old Zoey Harris, a biracial Black teen from the suburbs outside Houston, Texas. As the daughter of divorced parents, Zoey's used to splitting herself in two. But when her mom gets an unbelievable job offer in Seattle, Zoey's two homes are suddenly thousands of miles apart. This musical follows Zoey from her last day of junior year to the final lingering moments of summer break, as she navigates her changing relationship with her mother and a new friendship with a local musician named Leah, a girl who sees right through every wall Zoey's ever built. This is definitely not the summer Zoey expected. And when it's time to leave Seattle for her final year of high school, Zoey's surprised to find herself with one foot in each world—not quite ready to leave, and forever changed.

Koryn Orcutt (she/her) enjoys a diverse music career as a singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist in the Seattle area. Her love of music was sparked in the fourth grade when she played the first notes of the clarinet and translated into a pursuit in classical music. She holds a Bachelors and Masters Degree in Multiple Woodwind Performance from the University of North Texas and can now be heard performing on flutes, oboe, English horn, bassoon, clarinets, and

saxophones in the pit orchestras of The 5th Avenue Theatre and Village Theatre. In addition to music performance, Koryn's passion for music grew into writing melodies and song lyrics. This love of songwriting has expanded into many released singles, including "Enough" and "Strut," currently repped in sync licensing catalogs for tv, film and ads. Her song, "Let Us Breathe" has been featured in the 2020-2021 season at the Village Theatre.

Danielle Mohlman (she/her) is a nationally produced playwright based in Seattle, WA. Her plays include *Nexus* (Hubbard Hall, The Kilroys honorable mention); *Dust* (Dacha Theatre, Cygnet Theatre Finish Line Commission, The Kilroys List); *Rushing* (Umbrella Project Writers Group); *Frankenstein* (Village Theatre KIDSTAGE); *Halcyon* (Seattle Public Theater, Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center semi-finalist); and *Rocky Road* (Project 5 Commission). Danielle is an alumna of Playwrights' Arena at Arena Stage, the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities Artist Fellowship, and the Umbrella Project Writers Group. She is a proud graduate of both Cal Poly Pomona and Emerson College, and a current company member with Dacha Theatre. She is currently developing multiple projects for theatre and film. This is her first musical. daniellemohlman.com

Beth Easton is a photographer based in the Pacific Northwest. You can follow along and view her work on Instagram [@seasalt.and.evergreens](https://www.instagram.com/seasalt.and.evergreens).

PABITIN

By Rheanna Atendido

Photograph by Stephen Zapantis

PABITIN is Filipino-American story about grief, gratitude, and growing up, set in a magicalized Seattle.

Rheanna Atendido (she/her) is a singer-songwriter, actor, and playwright from Seattle. As a second-generation Filipino-American, her mission in life is to put BIPOC individuals at the forefront of storytelling. Recent performing credits include: *Mamma Mia! AMT: NW Bookshelf* (The 5th); *Daddy Long Legs, Bright Star* (Taproot); *Twelfth Night* (Seattle Rep); *Dance Nation* (WET); *Head Over Heels* (ArtsWest). For updates on her musicals, opera, and upcoming album, follow her Instagram [@rheannaatendido](https://www.instagram.com/rheannaatendido)

Stephen Zapantis photographs people, creatures, objects, and scenes with the intent to visually communicate a small but fateful emotion or human gesture is paramount to his work. He relies on available light to emphasize these moments photographing on the streets, in public places and in nature. Zapantis records still images on film and digitally in black and white and color. He began at age 14 when his uncle gave him a camera and it changed his life. He was hooked by high school and continued to study, earning a BFA from the School of Visual Arts, NYC. Zapantis has taught black and white photography at the University of Richmond in Virginia and privately to other artists, individuals, and small groups. He lives and work in the city of Seattle, Washington. The image selected for the NWxNW program, "Eggs-travaganza" 2021, is from a continuing series titled American Yards. Zapantis is represented by Parklane Gallery in Kirkland, WA. More of his work can be viewed on his website and Instagram page. stephenzapantis.com

Untitled

By Claudine Mboligikpelani Nako

Photograph by Maleah Metz

Anika is a self-taught event florist who owns a very successful business. As the business has grown, so has the need for help. Though she prefers working solo, she reluctantly hires her cousin's daughter Keri to give her a hand at the shop. Anika has been quietly struggling with depression for some time, and it becomes harder to hide now that Keri is constantly around to ask questions. Anika feels the pressure of growing her business and resents that she makes a living delivering joy to other people when she can't seem to hang onto any for herself. When her rickety old Volkswagen Beetle breaks down again, Anika has an interesting thought: what if she learned to fix it herself? As a person whose mind is constantly filled with ugly thoughts, in spite of the fact that she touches beautiful things all day, she wonders if touching ugly things like grease, grime, and rust might clear the way for her mind to be filled with beautiful thoughts. As she learns from a mechanic mentor about the vehicle that has carried her from adolescence to adulthood, she discovers that her own broken parts may need repairing as well.

Claudine Mboligikpelani Nako (she/her) is an actor, writer, director, choreographer, teaching artist, and member of ACT Theatre's Core Company. Claudine recently worked as Assistant Director and Assistant Story Editor on the documentary film *History of Theatre: Part Zero* for ACT Theatre. Nako's most recent musical theater credit was as leading lady Rosalind in The Rep's musical production of *As You Like It* with the Public Works Project. Other recent stage credits include the title character in *Snow White* (Seattle Children's Theatre), Lucy in *Dracula* (ACT), and Paulinka in *A Bright Room Called Day* (Williams Project). Nako is a two-time Gregory Award Winner for Outstanding Lead for her work in *Little Bee* (Book-It Repertory Theatre) and *My Heart is the Drum* (Village Theatre). Film/TV credits include *Grimm* (NBC); *Three Busy Debras* (HBO); *Everything Sucks!*, *Raising Dion*, and *Outside In* (Netflix).

Maleah Metz is a Seattle portrait photographer and a huge theater lover. Prior to her photography business, she was heavily involved in the performing arts community, including participating in The 5th Avenue Theatre's summer programs when she was in high school. Metz's photo, taken at Pike Place Market, was coincidentally taken while she was doing a photo shoot with Jessie Peltier, a cast member of the national tour of *Disney's Frozen the Musical* when the show was in Seattle. For more of Metz's photography, you can view her website at www.maleahmetzphotography.com or Instagram @maleahmetzphotography.

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 American 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.

About Village Theatre

Based in Issaquah, WA, with operations in Everett, WA, Village Theatre is a leading producer of musical theatre in the Pacific Northwest. Producing entertaining, quality productions since 1979, Village Theatre has grown into one of the region's best-attended theatres. Through its Village Originals program, Village Theatre is nationally recognized for its contribution to the development of new musicals, having supported the creation of over 175 new works to date. Village Theatre also takes pride in nurturing tomorrow's audiences through its Youth Education programs, serving thousands of young people and their families annually.

For more information about Village Theatre and its programs please visit www.VillageTheatre.org

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