Photos of PS 124 Yung Wing Elementary students at the Junior Theater Festival are available to media. Please contact: Allison Van Etten, 323-449-5030, allison@ravenscroftpr.com.

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PS 124, YUNG WING ELEMENTARY FROM NYC WINS NATIONAL AWARDS AT 2013 JUNIOR THEATER FESTIVAL

ATLANTA - Students from the theater club at PS 124, Yung Wing Elementary based in New York City earned two national awards at the 2013 Junior Theater Festival, which took place January 18, 19 and 20 in Atlanta. Produced by New York's iTheatrics and Atlanta's Theater of the Stars, the Junior Theater Festival celebrates young people and the transformative power of musical theater; this year's festival brought together 4,000 students and teachers representing 82 groups from 23 states.

The PS 124, Yung Wing Elementary trip to the Junior Theater Festival was thanks to the leadership of Broadway choreographer, singer, dancer and director Baayork Lee (*The Chorus Line*) and National Asian Artists Project (NAAP). NAAP exists to be a leader in educating, cultivating, and stimulating audiences and artists—current and future—through showcasing exceptional work by vibrant artists of Asian descent. Art constantly evolves, and NAAP strives to command a place at the fore with a uniquely compelling American voice.

The PS 124, Yung Wing Elementary won a Freddie G Outstanding Production Award and Freddie G Outstanding Group Achievement in Dance Award. The 25 students presented selections from Disney's *The Little Mermaid JR.* for performer and author Tim Federle (*The Little Mermaid*, *Better Nate Than Ever)* and Lisa Mitchell, Disney Theatrical Group Education and Outreach Manager.

Said Federle of the group's performance, "The PS 124 students offered us a performance that rang true to the essence of junior theater. Their show was brilliantly staged and adorably performed." Added Mitchell, "PS 124 performed with precision and high energy. The cast definitely holds some stars in the making."

The PS 124, Yung Wing Elementary was one of five educational musical theater groups across the nation to perform as part of the New Works Showcase sponsored by Disney Theatrical Group. The students performed selections from Disney's *Aristocats KIDS* for all festival 4,000+ attendees.

As one of just eight schools from across the country to win a Freddie G Outstanding Production Award, the students performed a song from Disney's *The Little Mermaid JR*. again for all 4,000+ attendees at the Junior Theater Festival closing ceremonies.

Additionally, PS 124 students Emerson Fok and Eden Rolle were named to the Broadway JR. All-Stars, made up of two outstanding students from each group at the festival. The All-Star students performed the song "Oh, Bless the Lord" from *Godspell JR.* at the closing ceremonies.

Lead sponsors of this year's Junior Theater Festival were Music Theatre International, Disney Theatrical Group, *Playbill*®, PRG (Production Resource Group), and Sound Associates. Some of the theater leaders who traveled to Atlanta to work with the students and applaud their efforts were: Oscar® and Tony Award®–winning composer Alan Menken; Broadway director, producer, choreographer, and performer Jeff Calhoun (*Newsies, Disney's High School Musical*); producer and Disney Theatrical Group president Thomas Schumacher (*The Little Mermaid*); Kara Lindsay, Andrew Keenan-Bolger and Mike Faist, stars of the Tony® award–winning Broadway musical *Newsies*; Music Theatre International (MTI) CEO Freddie Gershon, a 2012 Tony® Honor recipient for Excellence in the Theatre; Skylar Astin ("Pitch Perfect", *Spring Awakening);* Briga Heelan ("Cougar Town"); Jacob Brent (*Cats*, Broadway); performer and author Tim Federle (*The Little Mermaid*, *Better Nate Than Ever)*; Tony®-nominated scenic designer Tobin Ost (*Newsies, Bonnie and Clyde*), and Tony® award–winning lighting designer Ken Billington (*Chicago*).

About PS 124's Theatre Club

Located in the heart of NYC's Chinatown, PS 124 Elementary School is also known as the Yung Wing School—named in honor of the first Chinese student in America. (Yung Wing came to America at age 18 to attend high school and was the first Chinese person to attend Yale University, graduating in 1853.) The students of PS 124 speak English, and many also speak the Chinese dialects Mandarin or Cantonese.

The PS 124, Yung Wing Elementary is dedicated to providing its students with a well-rounded education and offers programs designed to address not only the intellectual needs of students, but also their physical, emotional, and social needs. The Theatre Club is one such program that offers a creative outlet for students and also teaches them the value of teamwork. A great example of this is the group's rehearsal process. The cast attending this year's Junior Theater Festival is composed of 4th and 5th grade students. The 5th graders, who have previously attended the Junior Theater Festival, are mentors to the 4th grade students, who have little experience performing in front of large audiences. In the weeks spent preparing for and creating PS 124's production of Disney's *The Little Mermaid JR*., the older students helped the younger cast members with technical challenges such as voice projection and shared performance tips on how to "become" the characters and how to tell the story behind the music. As an extracurricular activity, the PS 124 Theatre Club is volunteer-run. Music teacher Ryan Olsen donated much of his time to this production, working with students during lunchtime and early mornings before class, as well as after-school rehearsals.

Community involvement is one of PS 124's core values, and the students of PS 124's Theater Club are active in their community. They frequently perform at local events year-round, including the Annual Holiday Artisan Market at the Time-Life Building in December.

In March of 2012 the group performed at Duffy Square (Times Square) in Manhattan to kick off "Musicals In Our Schools Week," which highlights the importance of musical theater programs in our schools. The advocacy initiative was sponsored by NBC's hit television show *Smash* and is administered by the Junior Theater Project (juniortheaterproject.org), a joint venture by New York's iTheatrics and Atlanta's Theater of the Stars, endorsed by New York City's Department of Education as well as Music Theater International (MTI), Rodgers & Hammerstein/R&H Theatricals, and Tams-Witmark Music Library.

This is PS 124, Yung Wing Elementary Theatre Club's third time participating in the national Junior Theater Festival. At their first appearance, in 2011, PS 124 students presented selections from *Guys and Dolls JR*. for all 3,000+ festival attendees. Last year the group presented selections from Disney's *Beauty and the Beast JR*. for adjudication and earned a Freddie G Outstanding Achievement in Acting Award.

Following is the PS 124's Theatre Club cast list and information for the 2013 Junior Theater Festival:

Director and Choreographer: Zoie Lam, educational outreach director for NAAP

Mandy Aw, age 9, grade 4
Matthew Chan, age 10, grade 5
Tiffany Chan, age 9, grade 4
Kelly Chen, age 9, grade 4
Orion Cheung, age 9, grade 4
Kayla Chiu, age 10, grade 5
Justin Chu, age 9, grade 4
Nicholas Chow, age 10, grade 5
Emerson Fok, age 10, grade 5
Fikirte Hunt, age 11, grade 5
Christy Hwang, age 10, grade 5
Kaitlyn Kong, age 9, grade 4
Justin Lai, age 10, grade 5
Dakota Law, age 10, grade 5
Charisma Lee, age 10, grade 5
Erica Lei, age 10, grade 5
Courtney Li, age 10, grade 5
Isabel Ma, age 9, grade 4
Kate Mak, age 10, grade 5
Sophia Mui, age 10, grade 5
Matthew On, age 9, grade 4
Eden Rolle, age 10, grade 5
Kylie Shen, age 10, grade 5
Brandon Wong, age 9, grade 4
Amanda Yee, age 10, grade 5

About Disney's *The Little Mermaid JR.*

In a magical kingdom fathoms below, the beautiful young mermaid Ariel longs to leave her ocean home to live in the world above. But first she'll have to defy her father, King Triton, make a deal with the evil sea witch Ursula, and convince Prince Eric that she's the girl with the enchanting voice. Adapted from Disney's 2008 Broadway production, Disney's *The Little Mermaid JR.* features the hit songs "Part of Your World," "She's in Love," and the Oscar-winning "Under the Sea." Music by Alan Menken, lyrics by Howard Ashman and Glenn Slater. Book by Doug Wright. Based on the Hans Christian Andersen story and the Disney film produced by Howard Ashman & John Musker and written and directed by John Musker & Ron Clements.

Highlights of the Junior Theater Festival Included:

Kara Lindsay, Andrew Keenan-Bolger, and Mike Faist, stars of the Tony® award–winning Broadway musical *Newsies*, performed the songs "Santa Fe," "Watch What Happens," and "Something to Believe In" for all festival attendees, and then the three actors joined the show's director Jeff Calhoun for a Q&A.

Tony-winning and eight time Academy Award winning composer Alan Menken (*Newsies*, *The Little Mermaid*) performed songs and he and Broadway producer Thomas Schumacher talked with students about their experiences in and insights on musical theater.

Broadway performer Tim Federle hosted a booksigning for his debut novel, *Better Nate Than Ever* (Simon & Schuster), which was recently named *TIME Magazine For Kids'* featured winter book. *Better Nate Than Ever*—about a small-town teen who crashes an audition for *E.T.: The Musical*—was inspired by Tim's time coaching the child stars of *Billy Elliot* on Broadway.

Eight exceptional educators from schools and performing arts centers around the country were selected for the fourth annual "The Freddie G Broadway Experience," in which the teachers received an all-expense paid trip to New York City to collaborate with each other and work one-on-one with Broadway greats. The event is sponsored by MTI's Freddie ("G") Gershon and his wife Myrna Gershon and is a thank you for all that teachers do to introduce the next generation to Broadway and musical theater.

MTI CEO Freddie Gershon conceived the junior musical in 1994 with nearly 300,000 performances since its inception. Beginning in 2010, the festival has paid tribute to his leadership and dedication by renaming its student awards for excellence in theater "The Freddie G's."

The 2013 Junior Theater Festival offered an enthusiastic environment for students and teachers to interact with *thousands* of others who share their passion for musical theater. In addition to presenting a 15-minute selection from a musical, both students and teachers participated in interactive workshops led by Broadway and West End professionals, gained from professional

development, enjoyed theatrical fellowship, and attended a professional production of *Blue Man Group* at the fabulous Fox Theatre. In true Junior Theater Festival form, student technicians worked side-by-side with festival staff in running all aspects of the festival experience.

The Junior Theater Festival was founded in 2003. In 2010 the Festival became an annual event.

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