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New York City Center presents THE LOBBY PROJECT

A Series of Pre-Show Events Presented in Conjunction with
The 2015 *Encores! Off-Center* Season

Featuring Actors, Dancers, Doctors, Clowns, and Other Special Guests

including

Jonathan Groff, Andrew Lippa, Sonya Tayeh, and theatreMAMA

June 24 – July 18 at New York City Center

New York, N.Y., June 5, 2015 – **The Lobby Project**, a series of free pre-show events presented in conjunction with the third season of New York City Center’s *Encores! Off-Center* series, will take place June 24 – July 18 at City Center. The events will place the *Off-Center* musicals in the context of their legacies and provide insightful explorations of the work the audience is about to experience.

Led by Artistic Director **Jeanine Tesori**, the critically acclaimed *Encores! Off-Center* series returns to City Center for a third season of landmark Off-Broadway musicals. The season includes three shows: **William Finn** and **James Lapine**’s medical fantasia *A New Brain* (June 24-27), **Alan Menken** and **Howard Ashman**’s cautionary houseplant fable *Little Shop of Horrors* (July 1-2), and **Andrew Lippa**’s tragic Jazz Age love story *The Wild Party* (July 15-18).

The Lobby Project events will take place in City Center’s beautiful Grand Tier lobby one hour before curtain and are free for that evening’s ticket holders. Each Lobby Project event will be 45 minutes long.

The Lobby Project is sponsored by The Frederick Loewe Foundation.

LOBBY PROJECT CALENDAR OF EVENTS

“Not For The Life of Me”: Dick Scanlan and *Thoroughly Modern Millie*

When: Weds June 24 at 6:30pm

William Finn wrote *A New Brain* partly as a way of addressing the importance of art after a catastrophic health scare. Tony Award nominee **Dick Scanlan**’s experience creating *Thoroughly Modern Millie* runs

parallel to Finn's: while pouring life into the exuberant musical that *Millie* became, Scanlan was living with HIV. Even when told by doctors that living another six months seemed unlikely, he continued to work tirelessly on the piece, and both the artist and his work are now vibrant presences in our world. Scanlan—who is directing *Little Shop of Horrors* at *Off-Center*—will appear with **Jeanine Tesori** to relive the creation of *Millie* through humor, conversation, and a healthy dose of nostalgia.

Beethoven's String Quartets: Music, Health, and the Brain

When: Thurs June 25 at 6:30pm

What art do we create out of the fear of not being able to create art tomorrow? *A New Brain* is hardly the first work to confront that question; the same themes are on vivid display in the compositions that Beethoven wrote as his hearing deteriorated over the last 30 years of his life. At this Lobby Project, the acclaimed **Momenta Quartet** will trace this progression by performing Beethoven's early to late string quartets.

Matt Wilson: Clown Doctor

When: Fri June 26 at 7pm

A New Brain explores the world of the hospital with equal parts humor and pathos. **Matt Wilson** has done the same—not only does his theater piece *Clown Baggage* explore doctor-patient relationships through the lens of clowning, but he has worked for over a decade as a “clown doctor” in youth hospitals throughout the country, bringing spit takes and pratfalls to those who need them most. Wilson will perform an excerpt from his piece and discuss the art of clowning.

Dr. Rita Charon and Narrative Medicine

When: Sat June 27 at 1pm

Dr. Rita Charon is the Founder and Executive Director of the Program in Narrative Medicine at Columbia University. Beginning as a general internist, Dr. Charon got a Ph.D. in English after being struck by the centrality of storytelling in the relationship between doctors and patients. Her pioneering work has a direct parallel in the storytelling process in musicals—particularly the medically themed *A New Brain*. Dr. Charon will lead an interactive workshop and share her beliefs about the importance of narrative medicine.

A Conversation with Jonathan Groff

When: Sat June 27 at 7pm

Jonathan Groff has a personal connection to *A New Brain* that stretches far beyond this production. “You know how when you grow up listening to things, they become part of the fabric of your mind?” he says. “This is one of those scores for me.” Groff will discuss his history with the material and his process of getting into the character of composer Gordon Schwinn (spoiler: he learned to play the piano for the role).

On Decadence

When: Weds July 15 at 6:30pm

Dec-a-dence (*dekədəns*): from French *décadence*, from medieval Latin *decadentia*; *luxurious self-indulgence, related to decay*. The experimental performing arts masterminds at **theatreMAMA** (whose clients include *Pippin*, *Chicago*, and *Blue Man Group*) will create an evening of decadent indulgence—from sinfully rich Myzel's chocolate to exotic tear-away costumes to a special celebrity guest appearance. Come ready to be surprised, and leave your good manners at the door.

Dance with Sonya Tayeh

When: Thurs July 16 at 6:30pm

So You Think You Can Dance staple **Sonya Tayeh**'s method of teaching is as searingly powerful as her choreography. This Lobby Project event will offer a rare glimpse into Tayeh's creative process; she'll discuss how she developed the choreography for *The Wild Party* and lead audience members through some of the steps. Don't wear your strappy heels to this one!

1920s Mixtape

When: Fri July 17 at 7pm

Songwriter, performer, and *Off-Center* alum **Lorenzo Wolff** will lead a group of top-tier jazz musicians as they take on classic songs ranging from grunge to classical to bubblegum pop and reimagine them through the musical lens of the 1920s.

The Evolution of Social Dance

When: Sat July 18 at 1pm

The 1920s and 1930s marked a cataclysmic shift in how Americans socialized through dance. With the growing popularity of jazz music came a style of dance that burst away from the formalized waltzes and foxtrots of the day—and with jazz came social spaces where people of different races and social classes interacted freely. In this dance lecture/lesson, choreographers **Torya Beard** and **Ayodele Casel** will use movement to lead audience members through the evolution of the dance form.

Andrew Lippa: Stories and Lost Songs

When: Sat July 18 at 7pm

Andrew Lippa—the triple-threat bookwriter, composer, and lyricist of *The Wild Party*—will appear in conversation with *Encores!* *Off-Center* Artistic Director **Jeanine Tesori** to talk about how he came to write the musical. Lippa will also perform selected material written for *The Wild Party* that didn't make it into the final production.

Program and Artists subject to change.

NOTE: There will not be Lobby Project events before the performances of *Little Shop of Horrors* on July 1-2.

THE 2015 ENCORES! OFF-CENTER SEASON

A New Brain, inspired by **William Finn**'s personal experiences, is a medical tragedy seen through the iris of a Looney Tunes short. After a struggling composer (**Jonathan Groff**) collapses face-first into a plate of spaghetti, he is diagnosed with a brain tumor and is forced to come to terms with his creative ambitions and the people in his life: an overbearing mother (**Ana Gasteyer**), a ruthless kiddie-show host (**Dan Fogler**), and a boyfriend who'd "rather be sailing" (**Aaron Lazar**). *A New Brain* runs June 24-27.

Little Shop of Horrors is **Howard Ashman** and **Alan Menken**'s giddy, gory sci-fi musical about Seymour Krelborn (**Jake Gyllenhaal**), a hapless florist shop worker who pursues a doomed romance with his ditzy, lovable co-worker Audrey (**Ellen Greene**) by acquiring an R&B singing plant (**Eddie Cooper**) that feeds on human blood. *Little Shop of Horrors* runs July 1-2.

The Wild Party tells the tragic tale of Jazz Age party girl Queenie (**Sutton Foster**), who spends one booze-soaked night encountering vaudevillians, hookers, and a handsome stranger who offers the hope of a less tawdry life. Written by **Andrew Lippa**, the musical premiered Off-Broadway in 2000. *The Wild Party* runs July 15-18.

New York City Center gratefully acknowledges the *Encores! Off-Center* Founding Sponsors, Stacey and Eric Mindich and Stacy Bash-Polley; Leadership Sponsor, Nathalie and Pablo Salame; Series Sponsors, American Express, Luigi Caiola and Sean McGill, and Andrew Martin-Weber; with additional support provided by The Frederick Loewe Foundation, Paula and Ira Resnick, Alec Stais and Elissa Burke, and the Stephanie and Fred Shuman Fund for *Encores!* Support for *Little Shop of Horrors* is provided by Patricia Lovejoy.

New York City Center (Arlene Shuler, President & CEO) has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city since 1943. It was Manhattan's first performing arts center, dedicated by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia with a mission to make the best in music, theater, and dance accessible to all audiences. Today, City Center is home to many distinguished companies, including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, City Center's Principal Dance Company, as well as Manhattan Theatre Club; a roster of renowned national and international visiting artists; and its own critically acclaimed and popular programs. The Tony-honored *Encores!* musical theater series has been hailed as "one of the very best reasons to be alive in New York." In summer 2013, City Center launched *Encores! Off-Center*, a series that features landmark Off-Broadway musicals filtered through the lens of today's most innovative artists. Dance has been integral to the theater's mission from the start — and dance programs, including the annual *Fall for Dance* Festival, remain central to City Center's identity. Vital partnerships with arts organizations including Jazz at Lincoln Center and London's Sadler's Wells Theatre enhance City Center's programmatic offerings. City Center is dedicated to providing educational opportunities to New York City students and teachers through programs such as *Encores! In Schools* and the Young People's Dance Series. Special workshops cater to families, seniors, and other groups, while events such as the *Fall for Dance* DanceTalk series offer learning opportunities to the general public. In October 2011, City Center completed an extensive renovation project to revitalize and modernize its historic theater.

The Lobby Project events will take place in City Center's beautiful Grand Tier lobby one hour before curtain and are free for that evening's ticket holders. Tickets for *A New Brain*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *The Wild Party* can be purchased online at www.NYCityCenter.org, by calling CityTix at 212.581.1212, or at the City Center Box Office (West 55th Street between 6th and 7th Avenues).