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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The Puppets are Bigger, Better and Back This Summer!  
Broadway Hit Musical *Avenue Q* Comes to Piedmont Park  
June 3 – 7 at Piedmont Park**

ATLANTA – **Smash hit, three-time Tony award winner *Avenue Q* is coming to Piedmont Park this summer, June 3 – 7, 2015!** After two sold out runs, Horizon Theatre will bring its award-winning *Avenue Q* to an outdoor stage at the Park in a **brand new PG-13 Edition**– and **thousands of FREE tickets will be available to the public beginning May 1.** Get ready to experience a Broadway hit in the center of our city!

**“We are really thrilled to bring *Avenue Q* because it is truly an explosion of upbeat energy, music and puppets.** It’s all about finding your purpose in life and being part of your community – what better message to unite Atlantans through theatre in the heart of our city under the sky and treetops this summer,” said Lisa Adler, Horizon Co-Artistic/Producing Director.

**Smart, hilarious, and full of heart, *Avenue Q* is Broadway’s smash-hit Tony award winner for Best Musical, Best Score and Best Book.** Now it’s back and better than ever in a production the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* calls **“downright irresistible”**. Horizon’s *Avenue Q* is the winner of the **Suzi Bass Award for Outstanding Production of a Musical**, plus a sweep of 6 other Suzis in its 2011 debut.

Thanks to a major grant from **The Charles Loidans Foundation**, a supporting grant from the Mark and Evelyn Trammell Foundation and a partnership with the Piedmont Park Conservancy, **Horizon continues the tradition begun by Georgia Shakespeare of bringing free professional theatre to Piedmont Park this summer, giving new audiences a chance to experience Horizon.** “Our mission is to connect people, inspire hope and promote positive change through the stories of our times – and we are looking for ways to do that on a larger scale,” said Adler. “There has been a huge influx of new residents intown, and *Avenue Q* is the perfect show to introduce them to the amazing work they will find at Horizon and our other professional Atlanta theatres and the talented theatre artists who are thriving here.”

As a way to make the production available for a wider audience, the authors of *Avenue Q* created a PG-13 Edition that maintains the basic story line and the comedy of the original, but is edited to allow the themes to reach both parents and teenagers. **The PG-13 Edition will be**

**performed at Piedmont Park. “Avenue Q is so much fun, we want to make sure teens can come with their families,” explains Adler. “As the parent of a 14-year-old, I know there is a great need for plays that teens and adults can see together, and we encourage them to take advantage of the free tickets and come out to Piedmont Park.”**

**Park performances will be Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, June 3 – 7 at 7:30 PM, and audiences will provide their own blanket or low beach chair.** Grounds open for picnicking at 6 PM. **Free and \$15 Reserved Seating Section Tickets are available ONLINE ONLY beginning May 1.** Limited general admission tickets will be available for free at each performance. Reserved seating section tickets are \$15 (plus tax and service charge). Limited table seating is available for a higher charge. Tickets will be available online only at [www.horizontheatre.com](http://www.horizontheatre.com). Audiences will bring their print-at-home or mobile tickets and will need to bring their own low chairs or blankets for seating. There will be a Reserved Seating Section up front for paid tickets and sponsors. Anyone bringing a taller chair will be directed to the rear to allow good sightlines for all. Food and non-alcoholic beverages may be brought in for picnics – although no glass is allowed. No firearms allowed. Food trucks will provide dinner options for purchase and wine, beer, water and soft drinks will be available for sale onsite. The stage is in the Promenade green space at the North end of the Park, conveniently located near the Park/Botanical Gardens Sage parking garage and The Prado entrance to the Park.

**Following the Piedmont Park run, Avenue Q goes straight to the Conant Performing Arts Center at Oglethorpe University.** At the Conant, Horizon will present both the original adult version of *Avenue Q* and a few performances of the PG-13 Edition in rotating repertory. The production will run **June 12 through July 12, 2015.** Performances are Wed., Thurs and Fri at 8 PM, Sat at 3 PM and 8:30 PM and Sun at 5 PM. Tickets and information are available at 404-584-7450 and at [www.horizontheatre.com](http://www.horizontheatre.com).

### **More About Avenue Q: The Musical and this Production**

**The neighbors are nice on Avenue Q, the only address you can afford when you’re fresh out of college, out of a job, or just trying to find your way in life.** Princeton, Gary Coleman (yes, that one!), Christmas Eve and their newfound friends (played by talented actors and puppets) valiantly seek jobs, dates, and their ever-elusive purpose in life. This upbeat musical in its PG-Edition still tackles grown-up subjects like racism, unemployment, being gay, homelessness, longing and love with *Sesame Street*-like puppets, monsters, video and catchy tunes.

**“Avenue Q is about finding your purpose in life -- whether you are young or old, gay or straight, yellow, red or blue.** It fits perfectly with Horizon’s mission of connecting Atlantans through smart, positive, provocative contemporary theater that speaks to our diverse community,” continues Ms. Adler. **“It is a tour de force for an ensemble of 8 artists who act, sing, dance, puppeteer, and play musical instruments. It gives you hope and lifts your spirits. Don’t we all need that today?”**

**Horizon was one of the first theatres in the country to produce the play regionally, and the production won 7 Suzi Bass Awards in 2011: Outstanding Production of a Musical, Director of a Musical (Heidi Cline McKerley), Musical Direction (S. Renee Clark), Lead Actor in a Musical (Nick Arapoglou as Princeton), Featured Actress in a Musical (Leslie W. Bellair as Christmas Eve),**

Lighting Design of a Musical (Mary Parker), Scenic Design of a Musical (Moriah and Isabel Curley-Clay).

### **Writers, Cast and Creative Team**

**The co-creators of *Avenue Q*, Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx**, conceived the idea and co-wrote all of the songs, both music and lyrics, writing together, in the same room, at the same time. They met in 1998 in a BMI Workshop which changed their lives. **Robert Lopez is now one of only a dozen people (and the youngest) to have won an Emmy, a Grammy, an Oscar and a Tony Award, and the only person who has won all four within a decade.** He won the Tony Award for Best Score for *Avenue Q*, which has been produced in New York, Las Vegas, London, and around the world. He is also the co-creator of the Broadway hit *The Book of Mormon* with Matt Stone and Trey Parker from *South Park* which won the Tony for Best Musical, and won Tonys for him for Best Original Score and Best Book of a Musical as well as a Grammy for Best Musical Theatre Album. **Lopez and his wife Kristen wrote the songs for the animated Disney feature *Frozen*, including the much loved “Let It Go”** which won the Academy Award for Best Original Song. And just like his character Princeton, he also has a B.A. in English (from Yale: “What do you do with a B.A. in English?”). Jeff Whitty is a playwright who won the 2004 Tony Award for Best Book of a musical for *Avenue Q*. He also wrote the libretto for *Bring It On: The Musical* which premiered at Atlanta’s Alliance Theatre and continued to Broadway where it was nominated for the 2013 Tony Award for Best Musical.

**Horizon Theatre brings *Avenue Q* back with most of its original cast plus two top notch actors new to this production.** Reprising his Suzi Award-winning lead performance as fresh college grad, Princeton, is **Nick Arapoglou**. Nick’s been staying busy in feature films and was recently seen in *Romeo and Juliet* at The Shakespeare Tavern and in *The Gift of the Magi* at Theatrical Outfit. **Jeff McKerley** (recent: *Catch Me If You Can* and *Damn Yankees* at the Atlanta Lyric) is back again as sloppy slacker Nicky. Lucy, the sexy singer who seduces Princeton, is again played by **Jill Hames** (recent: *Hands on a Hard Body* Aurora Theatre, *The Rocky Horror Show* Actor’s Express). **J.C. Long** returns from three international tours with the American Shakespeare Center to rejoin the cast as Rod, the closeted investment banker who loves Nicky. Locally he was also seen in *Gut Bucket Blues* at True Colors and *Fly* at Theatrical Outfit. **Matt Nitchie** switches it up by returning as aspiring stand-up comic Brian after playing the leads in *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Taming of the Shrew* at the Shakespeare Tavern. Our final returning cast member is **Spencer Stephens** as Gary Coleman, *Avenue Q*’s maintenance man. Spencer is a regular performer and director at the Center for Puppetry Arts and is also serving as *Q*’s puppeteer consultant. Fresh from her starring role as Eliza Doolittle at Georgia Ensemble Theatre, newcomer **Molly Coyne** joins us as our new Kate Monster, the kindergarten teaching assistant monster who falls in love with Princeton. Rounding out the cast in human form is **Natalie Gray** as Christmas Eve, the Asian-American therapist without any clients. Formerly from Atlanta and now in NYC, Natalie is new to the Horizon cast, but not to *Avenue Q*; she played Christmas Eve for over a year in the commercial Las Vegas production.

**Creating the world of *Avenue Q* is the Atlanta creative team that swept the Suzi Bass Awards with *Avenue Q*.** Leading the ensemble is **Director Heidi Cline McKerley**, who has worked on over 20 projects at Horizon Theatre and is one of the hottest directors of musicals in town, including her recent work on *Cowgirls* at Horizon and *Catch Me if You Can* and *Damn Yankees* at the Atlanta Lyric. The musical side is helmed by **musical director S. Renée Clark**, a two-time

Suzi Award winner whose collaborations with Ms. Cline McKerley go back more than fifteen years. She has music directed many Horizon productions, including last year's *Cowgirls* and *Right On*. Horizon's favorite scenic design duo, resident designers **Moriah and Isabel Curley-Clay**, return for the outdoor staging with a simplified, more weatherproof version of their Suzi Award-winning streetscape for people and puppets. Horizon resident lighting designer **Mary Parker** scales her lighting for this outdoor venue as well. The rest of the team includes: props designer, **MC Park**, resident prop master at Georgia Ensemble Theatre; costume designer **Anna Jenny**, now designing for the shows at the Georgia Aquarium; and video designer, **Bradley Bergeron**. The colorful and furry cast of puppets are original designs, hand built by **Russ Walko**, who designs puppets for film, television and the stage in his West Coast workshop.

So if you have ever been looking for an apartment, a job, love, your personal identity, or your purpose in the world (or plan on it soon) join in the fun at Horizon Theatre. **This politically incorrect cross between *Sesame Street* and *The Simpsons* uses clever writing and catchy songs to take a look at the issues we face every day.**

### **Tickets and More**

**Avenue Q: PG-13 Edition opens in Piedmont Park June 3 and runs through June 7.** The grounds open at 6 PM for picnics and the show begins at 7:30 PM. The PG-13 Edition will be performed at this location but is not recommended for small children. Performance site is reached most conveniently from parking at the Botanical Gardens/Piedmont Park garage. Free general admission and \$15 reserved seating section. Both free and reserved seats will go on sale May 1.

**And don't forget to stay after the show for your photo op with your favorite Avenue Q puppets.** Tickets and information are available at [horizontheatre.com](http://horizontheatre.com) or 404.584.7450.

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## The Summary

### AVENUE Q\*

Smart, hilarious, risqué and full of heart, *Avenue Q* is Broadway's smash-hit Tony award winner for Best Musical, Best Score and Best Book and a worldwide sensation. Horizon's *Avenue Q* is the winner of 2011 Suzi Bass Awards for Outstanding Production of a Musical and 6 other Suzis. The neighbors are nice on Avenue Q, the only address you can afford when you're fresh out of college, out of a job, or just trying to find your way in life. Princeton, Gary Coleman (yes, that one!), Christmas Eve and their newfound friends (played by talented actors and puppets) valiantly seek jobs, dates, and their ever-elusive purpose in life. ***Sesame Street* meets *The Simpsons* in this upbeat musical for grown-ups.**

\*Contains mature language and situations; not intended for children.

### Playwright

Music & Lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx

Book by Jeff Whitty

### Creative Team

Director	Heidi Cline McKerley
Music Director	S. Renée Clark
Scenic Designer	Moriah & Isabel Curley-Clay
Puppet Designer	Russ Walko
Light Designer	Mary Parker
Prop Designer	MC Park
Video Designer	Bradley Bergeron
Stage Manager	Jude Futral*
Asst. Stage Manager	Kayla Zinke

### The Cast

Princeton	Nick Arapoglou*
Kate Monster	Molly Coyne*
Lucy the Slut/Bear	Jill Hames
Nicky/Trekkie	Jeff McKerley*
Rod/Trekkie	J.C. Long*
Gary Coleman	Spencer Stephens
Christmas Eve	Natalie Gray*
Brian	Matt Nitche

\*Member of Actors Equity Association

**Location:** Piedmont Park, The Promenade green space (North end of the Park, near the Park/Botanical Gardens parking garage and The Prado entrance to the Park)

**Dates:** June 3 – June 7, 2015

**Days and Times:** Wednesday through Sunday at 7:30 PM.

**Prices:** Free General Admission Tickets and \$15\* Reserved Seating Section Tickets on sale starting May 1. (\*plus 12% sales tax and fees). Table seating available: see website for details. No refunds or exchanges. PURCHASE ONLINE ONLY.

**Seating:** Bring your own blanket or low beach chair. Regular seating height chairs will be placed in the back of the audience to ensure clear sightlines for all. Limited table seating available for a higher charge and for sponsors.

**Restrictions:** No glass, firearms or alcohol may be brought into the picnic/performance area. Any brought in will be sent back to your car or removed and held at the gate.

**Food and Beverage:** Bring your own picnic or purchase from onsite food trucks and concessions/bar. Audiences can bring their own food, water, and soft drinks – but no alcohol or glass. Wine, beer, water and soft drinks will be available for purchase.

**Tickets and info:** [www.horizontheatre.com](http://www.horizontheatre.com)

**Info only:** 404-584-7450

### **About Horizon Theatre Company**

Horizon Theatre Company connects people, inspires hope and promotes positive change through the stories of our times. We produce professional area and world premieres of smart, funny and provocative contemporary plays. We also develop the next generation of diverse artists and audiences. For more information about tickets, group sales, or to receive a season brochure, call 404.584.7450 or visit [horizontheatre.com](http://horizontheatre.com).

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