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ArtsBridge Announces Winners of 9th Annual Georgia High School Musical Theatre Awards

ATLANTA, GA --- ArtsBridge Foundation, producer of the 9th Annual Georgia High School Musical Theatre Awards – Shuler Hensley Awards, announces the 2017 Shuler Awards winners. Presented by the Georgia Lottery, the awards ceremony was held at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre on April 20, and televised by Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB). Awards highlights include: Overall Production: Heritage High School, *Les Misérables*; Direction: Dr. Kim Watters, Mike Earnest, & Richard Bristow, Gordon Central High School, *The Spitfire Grill*; Best Performance by a Leading Actress: Parker Jennings as Dorothy Brock, Greater Atlanta Christian School, *42nd Street* and Best Performance by a Leading Actor: Ramone Nelson as Jean Valjean, Heritage High School, *Les Misérables*.

The Shuler Awards, fashioned after Broadway's Tony Awards, celebrate excellence in high school musical theatre. The evening kicked off with red carpet arrivals by nominees and special guests. The show opened with the 120 member Shuler Student Ensemble joining Shuler Hensley on stage for a dazzling performance of "A Musical" from *Something Rotten*. During the evening, there were outstanding performances by all six schools nominated for Best Overall Production and by the Leading Actor and Actress nominees. Milton High School, winner of the Showstopper Award, performed "9 to 5."

Adding to the festive atmosphere were video shout-outs by Broadway luminaries and celebrated actors including Glenn Close, Hugh Jackman, Chandler Riggs, Wayne Kirkpatrick, and Stephen Sondheim.

The recipients of the Leading Actor and Leading Actress Awards will travel to New York City to participate in the National High School Musical Theatre Awards, taking place at the Minskoff Theater on Broadway on June 26, 2017. They will compete with young performers from across the country for the coveted Jimmy™ Award as well as merit scholarships and professional opportunities.

35 public and private schools from throughout the state were nominated in 17 categories for Shuler Awards this year. To determine the nominees, a team of more than 60 Georgia-based arts professionals evaluated the productions of 75 participating high schools. Awards were presented in 17 categories. The accounting firm of Bennett Thrasher tabulated the results.

Here is the complete list of Shuler Awards winners:

DIRECTION

Dr. Kim Watters, Mike Earnest, & Richard Bristow, Gordon Central High School, *The Spitfire Grill*

MUSIC DIRECTION

Shannan O'Dowd, Johns Creek High School, *Cinderella*

ORCHESTRA

Brennan Blotner, Johns Creek High School, *Cinderella*

CHOREOGRAPHY

Carly Ann Berg, Lambert High School, *James and the Giant Peach*

ENSEMBLE

Gordon Central High School, *The Spitfire Grill*

TECHNICAL EXECUTION

Abby Yake, Mount Paran Christian School, *Beauty and the Beast*

LIGHTING DESIGN

Wesley Forlines, The Lovett School, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*

SOUND

Kellen Blotner, Johns Creek High School, *Cinderella*

SCENIC DESIGN

Sim Jones, Milton High School, *9 to 5*

COSTUMES

Anna Bragg, Providence Christian School, *Mary Poppins*

BEST PERFORMANCE BY A LEADING ACTRESS

Parker Jennings as Dorothy Brock, Greater Atlanta Christian School, *42nd Street*

BEST PERFORMANCE BY A LEADING ACTOR

Ramone Nelson as Jean Valjean, Heritage High School, *Les Misérables*

BEST PERFORMANCE BY A SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Emma Grace Crumbley as Madame, Johns Creek High School, *Cinderella*

BEST PERFORMANCE BY A SUPPORTING ACTOR

Matthew Schwartz as Man in Chair, Pope High School, *The Drowsy Chaperone*

BEST PERFORMANCE BY A FEATURED PERFORMER

Jelani Winston as Audrey II, Walton High School, *Little Shop of Horrors*

OVERALL PRODUCTION

Heritage High School, *Les Misérables*

SHOWSTOPPER

Milton High School, *9 to 5*

Additionally, the following students received scholarships:

Broadway Dreams Foundation Summer Intensive Scholarship

Dean McKenzie, Lambert High School

Owen Smith, Milton High School

Alliance Theatre Summer Intensive Scholarship

Abigail Wright, Calhoun High School

Hayden Kerzie, Milton High School

The Performers Warehouse Summer Intensive Scholarship

Arianna Hardaway, Heritage High School

Morrell Memorial Music Education Scholarship

Mary Christine, Greenbrier High School

James Carlos Family Musical Theatre Performance Scholarship

Brody Grant, North Forsyth High School

The 2017 Shuler Hensley Awards are made possible by the following generous sponsors: presenting sponsor – The Georgia Lottery; gold sponsors – Georgia Public Broadcasting, Bennett Thrasher, Georgia State University TV; silver sponsors – Delta Community Credit Union, Zeist Foundation, Molly Blank Foundation; bronze sponsor – Six Flags Over Georgia.

ArtsBridge Foundation is dedicated to providing quality arts education and community programs that engage, motivate, inspire, and elevate the next generation of artists and arts supporters. ArtsBridge provides arts education opportunities to students in grades K-12 through programs at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre including Field Trips, Master Classes, a Family Series, and the annual Georgia High School Musical Theatre Awards – The Shuler Hensley Awards. Since inception in 2007, ArtsBridge has served more than 300,000 students and educators from 54 Georgia counties. ArtsBridge Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. To learn more about their programs visit artsbridgega.org.

As one of the largest PBS stations in the nation, **Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB Media)**, has been creating content worth sharing for over 50 years. With nine television stations, 18 radio stations and a multi-faceted digital presence, GPB strives to educate, entertain and enrich the lives of our viewers and listeners with programming that includes statewide radio news, current affairs, high school sports, educational resources for teachers and students and enlightening programs like Georgia Outdoors, On Second Thought, Two-Way Street and Political Rewind.

GSUTV is a partnership between Georgia State University and Georgia Public Broadcasting, with the digital sub channel focusing on arts and culture. The majority of the channel's programming is developed and produced by GSU students under the mentorship and supervision of industry professionals and professors of practice from the GSU Department of Communication. The channel's programming is broadcast in Georgia on The Knowledge Channel (channel 8.3) as well as on Comcast (channel 246). As a fully credited curriculum course the GSUTV film & journalism practicum is committed to providing the student producer with the type of professional mentoring that will allow them to find careers in the fields of digital journalism and broadcast production.

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MEDIA: *There are materials available to go with this release in the ArtsBridge media Dropbox here: <http://bit.ly/2n15Z8l>. To set up interviews, or for additional press materials or requests please contact Karen Hatchett at karen@hatchettpr.com*