



**DURANT ROAD MUSICAL THEATRE WINS NATIONAL AWARDS AT  
2012 JUNIOR THEATER FESTIVAL IN ATLANTA**

***Celebrities who Lent their Applause to Students include***

***NBC's SMASH Actors Brian d'Arcy James, Christian Borle, and Jaime Cepero,  
SMASH executive producers Craig Zadan and Neil Meron***

***A Chorus Line's Baayork Lee, Bonnie and Clyde's Jeff Calhoun and  
Annie creators Thomas Meehan, Charles Strouse and Martin Charnin***

**NEW YORK** – Students from **Durant Road Musical Theatre (DRMT)** in Wake Forest earned a Freddie G Outstanding Production Award at the 2012 Junior Theater Festival, a monumental celebration of on-stage and backstage excellence which happened January 13 - 15, 2012 in Atlanta. Additionally, Nathan VanDeVelde and his director, Mrs. Debbie Rollins, received the Freddie G Broadway Junior Inspiration Award, for being an inspiration to all who perform musical theater.

Dana Grossman was one of only 35 students (out of more than 3,000 attending the festival) who made it to the final call-back for future Broadway Junior shoots for “how-to” choreography videos for musicals Disney’s *My Son Pinocchio JR.*, Disney’s *Peter Pan JR.*, *Xanadu JR.*, *Fiddler on the Roof JR.*, *Hairspray JR.*, *Singing in the Rain JR.*, and *Dinosaurs Before Dark KIDS - A Magic Tree House Musical* which will be taped in New York City this summer. The Broadway Junior scouts were on the lookout for outstanding students; 217 were invited to audition, and 76 made it to the final callback with iTheatrics resident choreographer Steven G. Kennedy. These videos will be used in thousands of schools across the country and internationally. (The final cast list will be announced in the spring.)

Presented by New York’s iTheatrics and Atlanta’s Theater of the Stars and sponsored by leading theatrical licensor Music Theatre International (MTI), Disney Musicals and NBC, the Junior Theater Festival is the world’s largest musical theater festival dedicated to groups working with elementary school, middle school and high school aged students.

The 30 students representing DRMT, ages 9-17, (complete cast list below), performed a selection from *Honk! JR.* for adjudication by a panel of national theatre professionals: Musical director Derek Bowley (Kennedy Center tour and premiere of *The Phantom Tollbooth*, world premiere of *The Trumpet of the Swan* at the Kennedy Center); and Shay Rogers, manager of education for Theatre Under the Stars in Houston.

Said Rogers, "The student choreographers in this group were brilliant, so mature and original!" Added Bowley, "From start to finish they made me fall in love with Honk! all over again. I wish I could see their whole production."

The group received a Freddie G Outstanding Production Award for its presentation, and as one of just seven schools from across the country to achieve that honor, the students reprised their performance of *Honk! JR.* for all 3,000+ attendees at the Junior Theater Festival closing ceremonies.

The students were also invited to lead the closing ceremony finale song "Brotherhood of Man" from the musical *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* for all 3,000 festival attendees. All the choreography was created by students Ashley Keefe, Christopher Rollins, and Garner Overton.

DRMT students Jessica Christopher and Adam Rollins were named as Broadway Junior All-Stars, made up of two outstanding students from each group at the festival. The All Star students performed the song "You Can't Stop the Beat" from *Hairspray!* at the closing ceremonies.

Following is the cast list of DRMT students who performed at the 2012 Junior Theater Festival:

Christopher Rollins, age 17, Wakefield High School, Wake Forest  
Emily Miller, age 14, Wakefield High School, Raleigh  
McKenzie Morrison, age 15, Leesville High School, Raleigh  
Julianna Miller, age 11, Wakefield Middle School, Raleigh  
Gabrielle Rinker, age 13, Durant Middle School, Wake Forest  
Jessica Christopher, age 15, Franklin Academy, Raleigh  
Charlotte Driscoll, age 14, Wakefield High School, Raleigh  
Elizabeth Morgan, age 14, North Raleigh Christian Academy, Raleigh  
Savannah Pardue, age 12, Wakefield Middle School, Wake Forest  
Ashley Keefe, age 15, Enloe High School, Raleigh  
Bobby Keefe, age 17, Enloe High School, Raleigh  
Dane VanDeVelde, age 13, Wakefield Middle School, Raleigh  
Nathan VanDeVelde, age 15, Wakefield High School, Raleigh (Technical Theatre)  
Garner Overton, age 15, North Raleigh Christian Academy, Wake Forest  
Trey Fitts, age 13, Wakefield Middle School, Wake Forest  
Nick Fadale, age 14, Enloe High School, Raleigh  
Kethan Fadale, age 14, Enloe High School, Raleigh  
Julianna Denmark, age 14, Leesville High School, Raleigh  
Madison Mitchell, age 9, St. Timothys, Raleigh  
Dana Grossman, age 13, Wakefield Middle, Raleigh  
Jackie Grossman, age 18, Wakefield High School, Raleigh (Technical Theatre)  
Tasia Whicker, age 15, Wakefield High School, Raleigh  
Jessica McGee, age 13, Homeschooled, Raleigh  
Maeghan Suzik, age 13, Ligon Middle School, Raleigh  
Kameron Mills, age 14, Sanderson High School, Raleigh  
Jayden McGrael, age 13, Wakefield Middle School, Raleigh  
Katie Clark, age 15, Cardinal Gibbons, Raleigh  
Shelby Barros, age 14, Wakefield High School, Raleigh  
Adam Rollins, age 14, Wakefield Middle School, Wake Forest  
Brooke Turner, age 16, Sanderson High School, Raleigh

In preparation for the festival, the students went through an intensive month-long casting process for *Honk! JR.*, with a twist—the students were the ones auditioning the musical! In September, the students broke into groups of 4-5 students and staged scenes and songs from four different musicals

in an hour. At the end of the evening each mini cast presented its musical, and the whole group discussed each show and how it fit with the cast's personality. At the end of the evening the students voted, and two musicals proceeded to the next level of tryouts. By the end of 3-4 weeks, not only had the cast decided on its show, but they had a working understanding of a number of musicals.

**Durant Road Musical Theatre** has enjoyed great success at past Junior Theater Festivals. Last year DRMT students won a "Freddie G Outstanding Production" award for their production of *The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley JR.* Cast members Christopher Rollins and Dana Grossman were invited to fly to New York City to appear in the first-ever workshop production of *Xanadu JR.*, and student Trey Fitts also traveled to New York to appear in a pilot production of *James and the Giant Peach*. Furthermore, DRMT was invited to be one of the first schools in the country to appear in a pilot production of *Singing in the Rain JR.* last spring. At the 2010 Junior Theater Festival, the DRMT cast earned a "Freddie G Achievement in Music" ensemble award for its performance of *Dear Edwina JR.*, and student Christopher Rollins was one of 21 young performers from across the nation to be cast in a national choreography video for the soon-to-be-released musical *Fame JR.* And at the 2009 Festival, the DRMT student players performed selections from *Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR.* and were awarded an "Outstanding Achievement in Dance" award.

### **About *Honk! JR.***

*Honk!* by George Stiles (composer) and Anthony Drewe (books and lyrics) was "plucked" as the 2000 Olivier award's "Best New Musical." A contemporary comic adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's "The Ugly Duckling," *Honk! JR.* follows "Ugly," whose odd, gawky looks instantly incite prejudice from his family and neighbors. Separated from the farm and pursued by a hungry cat, Ugly must find his way home, with only his loving mother "Ida" searching for him. Along his harrowing yet hilarious journey he not only discovers his true beauty and glorious destiny, but also finds love and acceptance in all its forms. The musical is so inspirational in its message of acceptance and tolerance that the Ministry of Education in Israel has made it compulsory viewing for school children.

### **About *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying***

From the authors of *Guys and Dolls* comes one of the most delightfully irreverent musicals of all time. A satire of big business and all it holds sacred, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* follows the rise of J. Pierrepont Finch, who uses a little handbook called "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying" to climb the corporate ladder from lowly window washer to high-powered executive, tackling such familiar but potent dangers as the aggressively compliant "company man," the boss' whiny, nepotistic nephew, the office party, backstabbing coworkers, caffeine addiction and, of course, true love. Book by Abe Burrows, Jack Weinstock, and Willie Gilbert; music and lyrics by Frank Loesser.

### **About "Smash Sunday" and NBC's SMASH: Make a Musical**

NBC's "Smash," a new musical drama series celebrating the beauty and heartbreak of the Broadway theater, sponsored "Smash' Sunday" on January 15th with a full day of activities for festival attendees. Guided by questions from the students, "Smash" cast members Christian Borle ("Legally Blonde: The Musical"), Brian d'Arcy James ("Shrek The Musical"), and Jaime Cepero ("Porgy & Bess"), alongside executive producers Craig Zadan and Neil Meron, spoke about the hard work and determination it takes to make it in the entertainment business.

With the "Smash" cast and producers on hand, Music Theatre International CEO Freddie Gershon announced the first 15 schools to be chosen for the national launch of "NBC's 'Smash': Make a Musical." Administered by iTheatrics' non-profit arm, The Junior Theater Project, this philanthropic initiative will help create sustainable musical theater programs in underserved schools nationwide. The first 15 schools to take part in "NBC's 'Smash': Make a Musical" program are: Renfroe Middle School in Decatur, GA; The University of Chicago Charter School Woodlawn Campus (UCW) in

Chicago, IL; Paschal High School in Fort Worth, TX; Place Bridge Academy in Denver, CO; Middleton Street Elementary School in Huntington Park, CA; Independence Charter School in Philadelphia, PA; Desert Sands Middle School in Phoenix, AZ; Wheaton High School in Silver Spring, MD; Sharpston High School in Houston, TX; W. H. Oliver Middle School in Nashville, TN; Leadership and Public Service High School in New York, NY; KIPP Bridge Charter School in Oakland, CA; Stroud High School in Stroud, OK; The Academy at Westinghouse in Pittsburgh, PA, and Morris E. Ford Middle School in Tacoma, WA. Five more schools in St. Louis, Portland, Cleveland, Boston and Minneapolis/St. Paul are in “final callbacks” for the program and will be announced soon.

This initial program launch is the catalyst for iTheatrics’ Junior Theater Project to produce 200 more “Make a Musical” programs in the fall. In 2013, iTheatrics plans to launch an additional 200 programs and by 2014, the goal is to have 1,000 new arts programs positively impacting over one million U.S. students. NBC is underwriting the initial 20-market program rollout with Broadway master professionals going into the schools and mentoring students and teachers.

In addition to the programs in the first 20 schools, the “Smash” cast and producers asked students to encourage other schools to go to [makeamusical.org](http://makeamusical.org) to apply to be one of the 200 schools taking part in the Fall 2012 “Make a Musical” cycle. These applications are due on March 2nd. America will vote on the top 30 finalists, and the winners will be announced on May 7th. In June, schools may continue to apply for the remaining 170 program slots.

### **Festival Highlights:**

Other celebrities which traveled to the festival included Broadway director, choreographer and performer Baayork Lee (*A Chorus Line, Promises, Promises, Flower Drum Song, The King and I*) and director, producer, choreographer and performer Jeff Calhoun (*Newsies, Bonnie and Clyde, Disney’s High School Musical, Deaf West’s Big River*). Award-winning *Annie* creators Thomas Meehan, Charles Strouse and Martin Charnin accepted the 2012 Junior Theater Festival Award recognizing their contributions toward the advancement of musical theater for young people.

Over 100 students donned wigs and Little Orphan Annie costumes to serenade award-winning *Annie* creators Thomas Meehan, Charles Strouse and Martin Charnin, when they accepted the 2012 Junior Theater Festival Award recognizing their contributions toward the advancement of musical theater for young people. In 1995, MTI Chairman Gershon partnered with Meehan, Strouse and Charnin to premiere *Annie JR.*, which launched Broadway Junior, the first educational division in a major musical theater licensing firm, which over the past 16 years has transformed the marketplace for age-appropriate performance material for young performers. Beginning in 2010, the festival has paid tribute to the leadership and dedication of Freddie Gershon who conceived the junior musical in 1994 by renaming its student awards for excellence in theater “The Freddie G’s.”

Eight exceptional educators from schools and performing arts centers around the country were selected for the 3rd annual “Broadway Welcomes America’s Teachers at the Freddie G Theatre Experience.” Teachers across the U.S. applied and eight were selected to receive an all-expenses-paid trip to New York City in summer 2012, 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. The educators who earned this honor are: Kevin Quillinan from Riverside Children’s Theater in Vero Beach, FL; Dina Slawson from Academy of Theater Arts in Williamsville, NY; Neehatima Dowdy from Wood Acres School in Marietta, GA; Rhonda Cato from Magic Curtain Productions in Orange, FL; Albert Carter from Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle School in Lynchburg, VA; Rachel Thuermer from Dare to Dream in Manitowoc, WI, who was selected as Dare to Dream earned the Freddie G Technical Theater Award; Bakari King from the University School of Nashville, TN, who was selected as the school earned a Freddie G Outstanding Community Service award.

Since Central Drama Players in Mayfield, Kentucky won the Freddie G Broadway Junior Spirit award, an adult representative from the group will also attend the Freddie G Theater Experience in New York City this summer.

Disney Musicals sponsored the Saturday, January 14th New Works Showcase in which six Junior Theater Festival groups performed new musicals for all attendees which will soon be made available for licensing by MTI. Boothbay Region YMCA in Boothbay, ME presented selections from Disney's *Peter Pan JR.*; Jeter Backyard Theater in Gibsonia, PA presented *Dinosaurs Before Dark KIDS - A Magic Tree House Musical*; Academy of Theater Arts in Williamsville, NY performed Disney's *My Son Pinocchio JR.*; Jefferson Performing Arts Center (JPAS) KIDS, in New Orleans, LA performed Meredith Willson's *The Music Man KIDS*; BATAVA in League City, TX presented *Dr. Dolittle JR.*, and Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School, Oak Park, IL performed *Finian's Rainbow JR.*

The 2012 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 their 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 *Annie* at the fabulous Fox Theatre sponsored by NBC's "Smash". In true Junior Theater Festival form, student techies worked side-by-side with festival staff in running all aspects of the festival experience.

While the Junior Theater Festival is not about creating the stars of tomorrow, many of the stars of today have played a role. Past festival attendees have included actor Zac Efron; Stephen Schwartz (the composer of *Godspell*, *Pippin*, *My Son Pinocchio*, *Children of Eden*, *Wicked*, *Mulan JR.* and *Captain Louie*); four-time Tony-nominated composer Jeanine Tesori (*Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Shrek the Musical*); Disney Theatrical Group President Thomas Schumacher; Broadway Director Kenny Leon (*Fences*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Mountaintop*), Grammy award-winning musician, producer and songwriter Bryan-Michael Cox; Broadway actors Henry Hodges (*Mary Poppins*), Jenn Colella (*High Fidelity*, *Urban Cowboy*), Jenifer Foote (*A Chorus Line*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*), Christy Carlson Romano (*Kim Possible*, *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, *Avenue Q*); American Idol's musical director, Michael Orland, and *Playbill* columnist and Talkin' Broadway radio host Seth Rudetsky.

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

Premiering on NBC on February 6th at 10 p.m. ET, "Smash" is a musical drama that celebrates the beauty and heart-break of the Broadway theater as it follows a cross-section of dreamers and schemers who all have one common desire -- to be a "Smash." The cast features Debra Messing (Emmy winner, "Will & Grace"), Anjelica Huston (Oscar winner, "Prizzi's Honor"), Jack Davenport ("Pirates of the Caribbean" films), Christian Borle ("Legally Blonde: The Musical"), Megan Hilty ("9 to 5: The Musical"), Katharine McPhee ("American Idol"), Raza Jaffrey ("MI-5," "Sex and the City 2"), Brian d'Arcy James ("Shrek The Musical") and Jaime Cepero ("Porgy & Bess"). The executive producers are Steven Spielberg (Emmy and Oscar winner, "ER," "Schindler's List"), Theresa Rebeck ("Mauritius," "NYPD Blue"), David Marshall Grant ("Brothers & Sisters"), Craig Zadan and Neil Meron ("Chicago," "Hairspray"), Darryl Frank and Justin Falvey ("United States of Tara," "The Borgias"), Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman ("Hairspray," "Catch Me If You Can").

PRESENTING SPONSOR: Music Theatre International (MTI), [www.mtishows.com](http://www.mtishows.com), is the leading theatrical licensing agency in the world, representing the performance rights to over 350 musicals. MTI is particularly dedicated to the idea of theatre as education and has created special collections for younger audiences including The Broadway JR. Collection®, which features 70-minute adaptations of major musicals designed for middle school children to perform, and the MTI KIDS

Collection®, which provides 30-minute musicals for performance by elementary school children. MTI recently launched MTI ShowSpace, [www.mtishowspace.com](http://www.mtishowspace.com) - a free online community giving thespians and fans a space to connect with anyone and everyone involved in the theatrical process.

**PRESENTING SPONSOR: DISNEY THEATRICAL GROUP (DTG)** operates under the direction of Thomas Schumacher and is among the world's most successful commercial theatre enterprises. Through Disney Theatrical Productions, Disney on Ice and Disney Live!, DTG brings live entertainment events to a global annual audience of more than 19 million people in more than 50 countries. Under the Disney Theatrical Productions banner, the group produces and licenses Broadway musicals around the world, including *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Lion King*, Elton John & Tim Rice's *Aida*, *TARZAN®*, *Mary Poppins*, a co-production by Disney and Cameron Mackintosh, and *The Little Mermaid*. Other successful stage musical ventures have included King David in concert, the national tour of *On The Record*, several touring versions of Disney's *High School Musical*, *Der Glöckner Von Notre Dame* in Berlin, a critically-hailed Off-Broadway production of *Peter and the Starcatcher* at New York Theatre Workshop and the premiere stage adaptation of *Aladdin* at 5th Avenue Theatre. *Newsies*, the breakout American musical that premiered to acclaim at Paper Mill Playhouse, will play a limited Broadway engagement in March 2012.

Disney Theatrical Group also delivers live shows globally through its license to Feld Entertainment, producer of Disney on Ice and Disney Live! For over 30 years, Disney on Ice and Disney Live! have brought beloved Disney stories and characters annually to over 12 million guests in nearly 50 countries worldwide through productions such as *Toy Story 3*, *Dare to Dream*, *Treasure Trove*, *Mickey's Rockin' Road Show* and *Phineas and Ferb: The Best LIVE Tour Ever!* In addition, DTG licenses musical titles for local, school and community theatre productions through Music Theatre International.

**PRESENTING SPONSOR NBC ENTERTAINMENT:** NBC Entertainment develops and schedules programming for the network's primetime, late-night, and daytime schedules. NBC's quality programs and balanced lineup have earned the network critical acclaim, numerous awards, and ratings success. NBC has earned more Emmy Awards than any network in television history. NBC's roster of popular scripted series includes such critically acclaimed comedy Emmy winners as "The Office" and "30 Rock," starring Alec Baldwin and Tina Fey. Veteran, award-winning dramas on NBC include "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit" and "Chuck." Unscripted series for NBC include the new vocal competition hit "The Voice" as well as the popular "The Biggest Loser," "The Celebrity Apprentice," and "America's Got Talent." NBC's late-night story is highlighted by "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon," "Last Call with Carson Daly" and "Saturday Night Live." NBC Daytime's "Days of our Lives" consistently finishes among daytime's top programs in the valuable women 18-34 category. On Saturday mornings, the network broadcasts Qubo on NBC, a three-hour block that features fun, entertaining, and educational programming for kids, including the award-winning, 3-D animated series *Veggie Tales*.

**FESTIVAL CO-HOST and CO-PRODUCER:** One of the oldest regional theaters in America, Atlanta's Theater of the Stars (TOTS) is celebrating its 60th Anniversary Season. TOTS has produced and presented more than 750 productions in Atlanta, across the country and around the world. Founded in 1953, TOTS mounts lavish productions of new and classic musicals at affordable prices with the goal of expanding traditional audiences, enhancing the availability of quality family entertainment, and exposing new audiences to the magic of live theater. TOTS is an active participant in the national theater community and is a founding member of the National Alliance for Musical Theater, the Independent Presenters Network and the Broadway League. In 2009, TOTS celebrated the 50th year of leadership from its producer, Chris Manos.

FESTIVAL CO-HOST and CO-PRODUCER: iTheatrics uses the transformative power of the arts to make the world a better place. The company adapts existing Broadway and West End musicals for students at all age levels—including elementary, middle, and high school—to perform. iTheatrics also creates a teacher’s tool chest of resources which provides educators with enhancements such as choreography DVDs, accompaniment CDs, director’s guides and curriculum connections. iTheatrics’ clients include Music Theatre International, Disney Theatrical Group and McMillan/McGraw-Hill. iTheatrics also develops new musicals for family audiences such as *The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley*, *The Phantom Tollbooth* and Roald Dahl’s James and the Giant *Peach*. iTheatrics’ Junior Teaching Intensives provide professional development for teachers in the area of musical theater and its Junior Theater Academy provides young artists with an innovative outlet for developing their skills as performers and artists.

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