



## ***THE VIERTEL/FRANKEL/BARUCH/ROUTH GROUP***



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### **NYC STUDENTS MAKE UNPRECEDENTED OFF-BROADWAY DEBUT**

#### ***10 NYC Student-Written Plays Performed at New World Stages in the Fidelity FutureStage<sup>sm</sup> Finale***

New York, May 21, 2007 -- **Fidelity Investments**, in partnership with **The Viertel/Frankel/Baruch/Routh Group** and **Leap** (Learning through an Expanded Arts Program), proudly presents the **Fidelity FutureStage<sup>sm</sup>** finale performances on May 21 and 23 at New World Stages. After seven months of intensive playwriting and production development, 10 student-written plays will be debuted over the two nights, showcasing the 10 New York City schools that participated in the inaugural year of this landmark theater education program.

“With the support of Fidelity Investments and the hard work of Richard Frankel Productions and Leap, this year over 800 New York City students have engaged in a deep and holistic study of theater,” said New York City Schools Chancellor Joel E. Klein, on behalf of the New York City Department of Education and the Office of the Arts and Special Projects. “The opportunities for our students to experience the best of live performance and to interact with quality theater artists are extremely valuable encounters; opportunities many of these students would never experience without this program.”

Launched last November as a joint initiative by Fidelity, The Viertel/Frankel/Baruch/Routh Group and Leap, **Fidelity FutureStage<sup>sm</sup>** has provided inner-city students, ages 12-19, with an unparalleled opportunity. Learning from leading playwrights, directors, designers and actors, students experience the thrill of bringing their own creativity and ideas to life on a professional stage.

For the past seven months, **Fidelity FutureStage<sup>sm</sup>** students have participated in over 1,000 hours of classroom workshops covering theater disciplines including writing, acting, production and design. Each student was tasked with writing their own original play, which was then developed, cast and rehearsed under the supervision of professional teaching artists coordinated by Leap. One play from each of the 10 participating schools was then chosen to be showcased in the **Fidelity FutureStage<sup>sm</sup>** finale at New World Stages.

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“These debut performances represent the hard work and tremendous creative effort of every student participating in **Fidelity FutureStage<sup>sm</sup>**,” said Jennifer Brown, Executive Vice President of Fidelity Investments. “These young people have shown remarkable dedication to prepare for this finale event, and we could not be more excited to celebrate their success.”

“The **Fidelity FutureStage<sup>sm</sup>** finale marks a debut that many professional actors dream of every night – and these kids are living that dream,” said Tom Viertel, partner of The Viertel/Frankel/Baruch/Routh Group. “**Fidelity FutureStage<sup>sm</sup>** has given these students a taste of what their own ideas and talents can bring to life. We’re thrilled to have been a part of making these experiences possible.”

In between classroom work and rehearsals, students were brought to see Broadway shows including *Hairspray*, *The Producers*, *Legally Blonde* and *The Fantasticks* – in most cases, their first visit to a professional performance. The program has also incorporated special guest lectures at the schools and theater visits with celebrated Broadway luminaries who collectively share an impressive 21 Tony Awards, and 57 overall nominations. These include:

- Walter Bobbie, director (*High Fidelity*, also past performer)
- David Gallo, set designer (*Company*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*)
- Tom Jones, lyricist, writer, director (*The Fantasticks*)
- William Ivey Long, costume designer (*Grey Gardens*, *Hairspray*)
- Kathleen Marshall, director/choreographer (*The Pajama Game*, NBC’s “You’re the One that I Want”)
- Alan Menken, composer (*Little Shop of Horrors*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Little Mermaid*)
- Jerry Mitchell, director/choreographer (*Legally Blonde*, *Hairspray*)
- David Rockwell, set designer (*Legally Blonde*, *Hairspray*; and restaurant designer: Town, Country, Nobu 57, Café Gray)
- Susan Stroman, director/choreographer (*The Producers*)
- Charles Strouse, composer/lyricist (*Annie*, *Bye Bye Birdie*)
- Jerry Zaks, director (*Caine Mutiny Court- Martial*, *Little Shop* and *La Cage* revivals, also performer)
- Raul Esparza, actor (*Company*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Taboo*, *Rocky Horror Show*)
- Judine Somerville, actress (*Hairspray*)
- Jack Viertel, creative director, Jujamcyn Theaters (acted as a dramaturg for the program)

Leap, with more than 30 years of experience and expertise in bringing the arts into city classrooms, identified the 10 schools to participate in the inaugural year of **Fidelity FutureStage<sup>sm</sup>**, and acted as liaison with school administrators throughout the program. Leap teaching artists have been an integral part of this initiative, working directly with the students to transform their ideas and creativity into polished presentations for a live audience.

“Through their participation in the **Fidelity FutureStage<sup>sm</sup>** program, many of these students feel like their voices are being heard for the first time,” said Leap Associate Executive Director Alice Krieger. “The opportunity to create a play of their own from conception to performance, working with professional artists and attending live Broadway shows are experiences that have opened the eyes of these students and given them newfound confidence and pride. The value of those results is priceless.”

***Additional sentiments from Fidelity FutureStage<sup>sm</sup> participants:***

“For my students to have the opportunity to write plays and see them produced has opened their eyes to the reality of the theatrical world. Formerly intangible thoughts and ideas have become very REAL.”

-- Amy Morrison, teacher at Hillcrest High School

“To me, Fidelity FutureStage means that people can do something great no matter what age they are. I wrote a play that is going to Broadway at the age of 13, and I am very proud of that!”

-- NDoumbe Fall, 7<sup>th</sup> grader at Voice is Power (V.I.P.) at MS 22,  
Playwright of “The World of Fashion”

“Writing this play required a lot of my mental energy and taught me the power of organization and discipline. This program gives students who have never even attended a Broadway play the opportunity to expand their minds and see that they have creative power.”

-- Melodi Conze, 12<sup>th</sup> grader at the High School for Enterprise, Business and Technology,  
Playwright of “Two of a Kin”

“This experience has made me outspoken in and out of class. The fear of speaking from my mind and heart is gone.”

-- Yung Cheng, 10<sup>th</sup> grader at Baruch College Campus High School

“This program meant a lot to me because I actually got to do something that made my parents really proud.”

-- Kelly Nunez, 8<sup>th</sup> grader at The Williamsburg Middle School Academy at MS 50

“Fidelity FutureStage has allowed the students to not only learn to tell stories within a playwriting structure, but to access their own personal experiences and feelings about the world. It planted the seed of possibly making their dreams a professional reality.”

-- Raquel Almazan, LEAP teaching artist with The Adlai E. Stevenson High School Campus  
and The Williamsburg Middle School Academy at MS 50

***Fidelity FutureStage<sup>sm</sup> Participating Schools***

- Hillcrest High School (Grades 9-12; located in Queens)
- Long Island City High School (9-12; Queens)
- Adlai E. Stevenson High School (9-12; Bronx)
- JHS 022 Jordan L. Mott (5-8; Bronx)
- Enterprise, Business & Technology High School (9-12; Brooklyn)
- JHS 050 John D. Wells (5-8; Brooklyn)
- JHS 383 Phillippa Schuyler (5-8; Brooklyn)
- Louis D. Brandeis High School (9-12; Manhattan)
- Baruch College Campus High School (9-12; Manhattan)
- Philip Randolph Campus High School (9-12; Manhattan)

Fidelity Investments, The Viertel/Frankel/Baruch/Routh Group and Leap look forward to bringing the **Fidelity FutureStage<sup>sm</sup>** program back to New York City schools this fall.

## **About Fidelity Investments**

Fidelity Investments is one of the world's largest providers of financial services, with custodied assets of \$3.1 trillion, including managed assets of more than \$1.4 trillion as of April 30, 2007. Fidelity offers investment management, retirement planning, brokerage, and human resources and benefits outsourcing services to more than 23 million individuals and institutions as well as through 5,500 financial intermediary firms. The firm is the largest mutual fund company in the United States, the No. 1 provider of workplace retirement savings plans, the largest mutual fund supermarket and a leading online brokerage firm. For more information about Fidelity Investments, visit [www.fidelity.com](http://www.fidelity.com).

## **About The Viertel/Frankel/Baruch/Routh Group**

Tom Viertel, Richard Frankel, Steven Baruch and Marc Routh have produced and general managed a wide range of plays and musicals on and off Broadway, in London and on tour for the past 20 years. Currently: *Hairspray*, *The Producers*, *Company*, *The Fantasticks* and *Stomp*. Previous productions include *Sweeney Todd*, *The Sound of Music*, *Swing*, *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, *The Weir*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Angels in America*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Penn & Teller*, *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*, *Oleanna*, *Mnemonic*, *The Cocktail Hour*, *Love Letters*, *Marvin's Room*, *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told*, *Forever Tango*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Jeffrey*, *Song of Singapore*, *Later Life* and others. They are principals in Broadway Asia Entertainment, a new production and management company focusing on the Asian market. Their shows have been awarded 31 Tonys, 42 Drama Desk Awards, 34 Outer Critics Awards, four Grammys, four Olivier Awards and two Pulitzer Prizes.

## **About Leap**

Leap (Learning through an Expanded Arts Program), serving over 200,000 students a year, is a non-profit educational service organization committed to improving the quality of public education through a hands-on, arts-based approach to learning. For the past 30 years, Leap has brought professional artists and educational experts to under-served students in the New York metropolitan area and continues to develop and deliver customized programs to schools, cultural institutions and community based organizations. By training teachers and working with students, Leap's goal is to improve academic performance, cultivate creativity and empower all students to reach their full potential. Leap Executive Directors Ila Lane Gross and Alice Krieger founded Leap in 1977, after working as educators in NYC, and have expanded Leap from a small, volunteer program in four Manhattan schools to a trusted, quality arts-in-education organization that currently reaches over 300 schools.

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