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***CATS* CLAWS ITS WAY TO THE TOP OF CHICAGO’S MOST ANTICIPATED FALL OPENERS, SEPT. 10-OCT. 12 AT AURORA’S PARAMOUNT THEATRE**

***CATS* is Paramount’s first musical eligible for Equity Jeff Award consideration; Subscriptions start at just $82 for four-show series also including *Mary Poppins*, *The Who’s Tommy* and *Les Miserables***

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Paramount Theatre’s production of ***CATS***, featuring a set design by **Kevin Depinet** (top, right), will be directed by (bottom, from left**) Shawn Stengel**, choreographed by **Harrison McEldowney**, and feature **Lauren Villegas**, **Rhett Guter**, **Joe Musiel**, **George Keating**, **Sawyer Smith**, **Amber Mak**, **Kristen Noonan** and **Andy Planck**.

AURORA, July 31, 2014 – Prepare to be immersed into a world like no other – the magical world of Jellicle Cats – when the Paramount Theatre, 23 E. Galena Blvd. in downtown Aurora, IL, presents ***CATS*** as the first production of its blockbuster 2014-15 Broadway Subscription series.   
  
Winner of seven Tony Awards, including Best Musical, Best Book and Best Score, ***CATS*** is one of the most popular and beloved theatrical productions on the planet, filled with unforgettable music by **Andrew Lloyd Webber** and lush orchestrations by **David Cullen** and **Andrew Lloyd Webber**. Performances are September 10-October 12, 2014. **Press opening is Saturday, September 13 at 8 p.m.** Regular show times are Wednesday at 1:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.; Thursday at 7 p.m.; Friday at 8 p.m.; Saturday at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.; and Sunday at 1 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Tickets are only $41 to $54. To purchase, go to [**ParamountAurora.com**](http://www.paramountaurora.com/), call **(630) 896-6666**, or visit the Paramount box office Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and 2 hours prior to evening performances. **Note:** ***CATS*** is rated G.

Packed with heart-pounding musical numbers including the show-stopping “Memory,” ***CATS*** is a dance-driven extravaganza entirely based on **T.S. Eliot’s** collection of poetry, *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats*. The action takes place on the most sacred night of the year as a tribe of felines prepare for the Jellicle Ball. Every member of the tribe tries to prove they’re worthy enough to be “the one” selected to be reborn in the afterlife and live for eternity in the glorious “Heaviside Layer.”

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Under the leadership of director and music director **Shawn Stengel**, Paramount’s ***CATS*** production team is working with the highest caliber of professional talent in every aspect including actors, musicians, creative and technical teams. In fact, Paramount’s continued dedication to excellence over the last three seasons, overseen by Paramount Artistic Director **Jim Corti**, prompted the Joseph Jefferson Award committee, Chicago’s equivalent of the Tony Awards, to expand its geographic reach. Thanks to this change, ***CATS*** will be the first Paramount production to be judged in the Equity Jeff Awards/Large Tier theater category for Chicago’s 2014-15 theater season.

Leading the ***CATS*** cast are **Lauren Villegas** as Grizabella The Glamour Cat and **Rhett Guter** as Munkustrap. Villegas has risen through the ranks of supporting roles over the past few seasons all over Chicago, notably at Paramount in ***In the Heights***, ***Fiddler on the Roof***, ***The Music Man***, ***Annie*** and ***My Fair Lady***. Guter, who Paramount audiences will recall as Tommy Djilas in ***The Music Man*** and Al De Luca in ***A Chorus Line***, most recently appeared in Goodman Theatre’s ***Brigadoon*** as Harry Beaton.

***CATS*** also featuresParamount veterans **Jaclyn Burch**, Kristine in ***A Chorus Line***, as Cassandra; **Brian M. Duncan,** seen in Paramount’s ***Joseph…***, ***A Chorus Line*** and ***42nd Street*,** as Coricopat; **George Keating**, Jacob/Potiphar in ***Joseph…***,as Gus The Theatre Cat and Bustopher Jones; **Terrance Martin**, Paramount’s ***In the Heights***, as Pouncival; **Liam Quealy**, seen in ***Annie***, ***A Chorus Line***, ***Joseph…*** and ***My Fair Lady***, as Skimbleshanks The Railway Cat; **Olivia Renteria**, Paramount’s ***The Music Man*** and Goodman’s ***Brigadoon***, as Silibub; **Laura Savage**, seen in ***The Music Man*** and ***42nd Street’s*** lead ingénue Peggy Sawyer, as Rumpleteaser; **Sawyer Smith**, Angel in Paramount’s ***RENT***, as Rum Tum Tugger; and **Holly Stauder**, Paramount’s ***Annie*,** as Jellylorum.

Newcomers to the Paramount stage are **Bryan Howard Conner** as Macavity; **Samuel Owen Gardner** as Tumblebrutus; **Kayla L. Harley** as Tantomile; **Ericka Mac** as Jennyanydots; **Lizzie MacKenzie Pontarelli** as Victoria; **Amber Mak** as Bombalurina; **Joe Musiel** as Mistoffelees; **Kristen Noonan** as Demeter; **Andy Planck** as Old Deuteronomy; **Jonny Stein** as Mungojerrie; and **James Monroe Stevko** as Alonzo.

The production will be enhanced by the power vocals of **Brandon Chandler**, **Jacqui Graziano**, **Molly Kral** and **Brandon Moorhead**, Paramount’s leading man Chris from ***Miss Saigon***. As always, the 16-member Paramount Orchestra headed by **Joel Raney** will play the full, original Broadway orchestrations for ***CATS***.

Behind the scenes, **Shawn Stengel**, music director for Paramount’s ***RENT***, ***Miss Saigon***, ***A Chorus Line***, ***Joseph…*** and ***My Fair Lady***, will serve double duty on ***CATS*** as both director and music director. In addition to his Paramount credits and conducting the Chicago productions of ***Billy Elliot*** and ***Wicked***, both at the Oriental Theatre, Stengel was MD/conductor for the national tours of ***Crazy for You***, ***And The World Goes ‘Round***, and ***CATS***, and played keys for Kander & Ebb’s ***The Visit***, Sondheim’s ***Bounce*** (Goodman), ***Mamma Mia!***, ***Chicago***, and ***Peter Pan*** with Cathy Rigby. His Chicago music direction credits also include Jeff nominations at the Marriott and Pegasus, plus Chicago Shakespeare, Northlight and the Royal George.

**Harrison McEldowney** is an acclaimed international choreographer whose awards include the After Dark, Ruth Page, and Choo-San Goh Awards, the Prince Charitable Trust Prize, an Emmy nomination as well as being part of several Emmy award winning documentaries. Most recently he received a Jeff nomination for his work on Marriott Lincolnshire’s Andrew Lloyd Webber review. He choreographed ***Macbeth*** for Chicago Lyric Opera with Chicago Shakespeare Theater, several Chicago Shakespeare Theater productions, Carnegie Hall’s Salute to 125 Years of Musical Theater, the ’92 Barcelona Olympics Closing Ceremonies, as well as Off-Broadway and the West End. He has been listed several times as one of the choreographers to watch by the *Chicago Tribune*.

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Stengel, McEldowney, and the rest of the ***CATS*** production team – **Joel Raney**, conductor; **Kevin Depinet**, set; **Theresa Ham**, costumes; **Jesse Klug**, lights; **Michael Stanfill**, projections; **Adam Rosenthal**, sound; **Sarah E. Ross**, props; and **Katie Cordts** and **Lauren Cecil**, wigs and make-up – are creating a stylistic environment filled with visual surprises from all departments. **Rose Marie Packer** is Production Stage Manager and **Rebecca Louise Fischer** is Assistant Stage Manager.

**Paramount’s 2014-15 Broadway Series is sponsored by the Dunham Fund, BMO Harris Bank and the City of Aurora. *CATS* is also sponsored by the *Daily Herald*.**

**Additional *Cat*-nip**

***CATS*** is the same musical that set records for running 21 years in London and 18 years on Broadway, surpassed only by Andrew Lloyd Webber’s ***Phantom of the Opera***. In the original 1981 London production, Dame Judi Dench, cast as Grizabella, snapped her Achilles tendon during rehearsal prior to the show’s opening night. In true “show must go on” fashion, Dench went on despite the injury and the cast received an astounding standing ovation.

**More about Paramount’s 2014-15 Broadway Subscription Series**

In just three seasons, the Paramount Theatre’s bold new Broadway musical series has wowed critics, audiences and skeptics alike. To date, more than 20,000 subscribers have signed up to take advantage of Paramount’s 2014-15 “Buy Two Shows, Get Two Shows Free” subscription offer and will be amply rewarded with Broadway-quality musicals, without the hassle of driving downtown.

Following ***CATS*** is Paramount’s holiday-season show, ***Mary Poppins*** (Nov. 26, 2014-Jan. 4, 2015), helmed by director **Rachel Rockwell**, *Chicago Magazine’s* “Best Director” (2010), the *Chicago Tribune’s* “Chicagoan of the Year-Theater” (2012), director of Paramount’s smash hits ***Annie*** and ***42nd Street***, and most recently, director of the Goodman Theatre’s revival of ***Brigadoon***. Paramount Artistic Director **Jim Corti**, who oversees the theater’s Broadway Series and is the only Chicago theater professional to win a Jeff Award for directing, choreography and acting, will stage the company’s winter production ***The Who’s Tommy*** (Jan. 14-Feb. 15, 2015) as well as Paramount’s blockbuster spring season finale, ***Les Miserables*** (Mar. 18-Apr. 26, 2015).

With Paramount’s Broadway packages starting as low as $82, musical theater fans can enjoy four incredible musicals for the price of just one show downtown and a host of exclusive subscriber perks. To subscribe, visit [**ParamountAurora.com**](http://www.ParamountAurora.com), call **(630) 896-6666** or visit the Paramount box office, 23 E. Galena Blvd., Aurora.

**Note:** To meet continued audience demand, Paramount is extending the runs of each production from last season’s four weeks to five weeks for ***CATS*** and ***Tommy***, and six weeks for ***Mary Poppins*** and ***Les Miserables***.

**About The Paramount Theatre**

The Paramount Theatre is the center for performing arts, entertainment and arts education in Aurora, the second largest city in Illinois. Named "One of Chicago's Top 10 Attended Theatres" by the League of Chicago Theatres, the 1,888-seat Paramount Theatre, located in the heart of downtown Aurora at 23 E. Galena Blvd., is nationally renowned for the quality and caliber of its presentations, superb acoustics and historic beauty.

The Paramount Theatre opened on September 3, 1931. Designed by nationally renowned theater architects C.W. and George L. Rapp, the theater captures a unique Venetian setting portrayed in the art deco influence of the 1930s. The first air-conditioned building outside of Chicago, the Paramount offered the public a variety of entertainment, including "talking pictures," vaudeville, concerts and circus performances for more than 40 years.

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In 1976, Aurora Civic Center Authority purchased the Paramount and closed the theater for restoration. The $1.5 million project restored the Paramount to its original grandeur. On April 29, 1978, the Paramount Arts Center opened, offering a variety of theatrical, musical, comedy, dance and family programming. In 2006, a 12,000-square-foot, two-story Grand Gallery lobby was added, with a new, state-of-the-art box office, café and art gallery.

Today, the Paramount produces its own, self-produced Broadway Musical series, presents an eclectic array of comedy, music, dance and family shows, and on most Mondays, screens a classic movie. For tickets and information, go to [**ParamountAurora.com**](http://www.paramountaurora.com/) or call **(630) 896-6666**.

The Paramount Theatre is one of three live performance venues programmed and managed by the Aurora Civic Center Authority (ACCA). ACCA also oversees the Paramount’s “sister” stage, the intimate, 216-seat Copley Theatre located directly across the street from the Paramount at 8 E. Galena Blvd., as well as RiverEdge Park, downtown Aurora’s new summer outdoor concert venue.  
  
The Paramount Theatre continues to expand its artistic and institutional boundaries under the guidance of **Tim Rater**, President and CEO, Aurora Civic Center Authority; **Jim Corti**, Artistic Director, Paramount Theatre; a dedicated Board of Trustees and a devoted staff of live theater and music professionals.

Paramount’s 2014-15 Broadway Series is sponsored by the **Dunham Fund**, **BMO Harris Bank** and the **City of Aurora**. For more information, visit [**ParamountAurora.com**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?e=001FViLyPbJ7QBxzfvP97vDAifWr34TfzGJUywYg43tecB0gjsnZQGugQyiT16hqygPS40wQCw5SdddFEd22VMh0wZF0rExueIznz_vwSHONEQ4LMfrMvhFQA==).      
  
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