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**Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts
Announces**

**From the Tony and Olivier Award-Winning Director of
Les Misérables and *Nicholas Nickleby* John Caird
and the Tony-Nominated Composer of *Jane Eyre* Paul Gordon:**

ESTELLA SCROOGE

A Christmas Carol with a Twist

**A World-Premiere Streaming Holiday Musical that
Uniquely Blends Theater, Film and Cutting-Edge Animation
Monday, December 21, 2020 through Sunday, January 3, 2021**

(BEVERLY HILLS, CA, December 10, 2020) — Just in time for the holidays, Wallis Annenberg Center for Performing Arts brings audiences a magical musical, created with new cutting-edge technology, that is sure to become new a holiday tradition – the World Premiere of ***Estella Scrooge: A Christmas Carol with a Twist***. The production features a cast of 24 award-winning Broadway notables, and is the creation of **John Caird**, (the Tony and Olivier Award-winning director of *Les Misérables* and *Nicholas Nickleby*), and Tony Award nominee **Paul Gordon** (*Jane Eyre*, *Pride and Prejudice*). Caird and Gordon also paired to create *Daddy Long Legs*, which played at numerous regional theatres throughout the country and in four countries before enjoying a successful Off-Broadway run for which Caird received a Drama Desk. *Estella Scrooge* is available for streaming from **Monday, December 21, 2020 through Sunday, January 3, 2021**, and tickets are now on sale at TheWallis.org/Scrooge.

Estella Scrooge is the first digital theater piece filmed entirely during the pandemic, utilizing cutting-edge technology. The fully-realized production, a dazzlingly cinematic musical theater adventure, was filmed using tracked green-screen techniques, with 3-D surreal digital environments created in post-production and merged with the actors' actual footage to bring the story to life in a brand-new way.

Betsy Wolfe (*Waitress*) stars as Estella, a descendent of her famous great-great-great-great-grandfather Ebenezer. **Clifton Duncan** (*The Play That Goes Wrong*) stars as Philip 'Pip' Nickleby. 2020 Tony Award nominee **Lauren Patten** (*Jagged Little Pill*) stars as Dawkins. The production also stars Tony Award nominees **Patrick Page** (*Hadestown*) as Mr. Merdle, **Carolee Carmello**

(*Parade*) as Marla Havisham and **Danny Burstein** (2020 Tony Award Nominee, *Moulin Rouge!*) as Ebenezer Scrooge.

The story follows Estella Scrooge, a modern-day Wall Street tycoon with a penchant for foreclosing. A hotelier in her hometown of Pickwick, Ohio has defaulted on his mortgage and Estella fancies the idea of lowering the boom personally. Arriving at Harthouse on Christmas Eve, Estella discovers that the defaulting party is her childhood friend Pip Nickleby (Duncan). A good and generous soul, Pip has transformed the property into a refuge for the sick, dispossessed and homeless. A freak snowstorm forces Estella to take refuge. That night, just as it happened to her ancestor Ebenezer, she is haunted by three visitations...and oh, what uninvited houseguests they are! A modern day take on Charles Dickens' beloved 1843 novella, *A Christmas Carol*, *Estella Scrooge* also wittily incorporates characters and plot lines from Dickens' other great novels, *Great Expectations*, *Little Dorrit* and *Bleak House*, among others.

Estella Scrooge is produced by **Streaming Musicals** in association with **Michael Jackowitz** of WitzEnd Productions, **Michael Alden** and **David Bryant**. Executive Producers are **Jeffrey Grove** and **Kevin Surace** and for StreamingMusicals, **Tom Polum** and **Stacia Fernandez**. Co-Executive Producers are **Jeffrey Grove**, **Allan Herzog** and **Dawn Smalberg/Bev Ragovoy**. It was originally developed over two holidays seasons at **Rubicon Theatre Company** in Ventura (**Karyl Lynn Burns** and **James O'Neil**, Artistic Directors), with further development and support from **Rhinebeck Writers' Retreat**.

The cast also includes **Megan McGinnis** (*Little Women*) as Betty Cratchit, **Adam Halpin** (*Dear Evan Hansen*) as Bob Cratchit, **Sarah Litzsinger** (*Beauty and the Beast*) as Sissy Jupe, **Tom Nelis** (*The Visit*) as Dedlock, **Em Grosland** (*Emotional Creature*) as Smike, **Phoenix Best** (*Dear Evan Hansen*) as Charity & Mercy, **David Bryant** (Original Marius in Broadway's *Les Misérables*) as Mr. Podsnap, **Gabrielle Reid** (*Beautiful: The Carol King Musical*) as Mrs. Pumblechook, **Samuel Lee Roberts** (*Radio City Music Hall's Christmas Spectacular*) as Mr. Flopson, **Michael Francis McBride** (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater) as Mr. Dombey, **Michele Lee** (*Nutcracker Rouge*) as Mrs. Noggs, **Kristen Faith Oei** (*The King and I*) as Ms. Skiffins, **Meg Gibson** (*The Gabriels*) as Molly, **William Youmans** (*Wicked*) as Magwitch & Bagstock, **Kevyn Morrow** (*Moulin Rouge!*) as Jasper Jagers, **Joziyah Jean-Felix** (*The Lion King*) as Young Pip, **Brooklyn Shuck** ("Evil") as Young Essy and **Willow McCarthy** (*The Ferryman*) as Tiny Tammy.

According to The Wallis' Artistic Director Paul Crewes, "Created during a pandemic world, *Estella Scrooge's* modern reimaging of a classic story, with a remarkable cast and direction from one of the theater world's great directors, speaks to the world we are now, but offers hope at the end."

Director/co-book writer **John Caird** says, "I'm so happy to bring this new musical to life in the midst of these mad and maddening times. The creative team nimbly learned new techniques to bring the actors and their characters together. It's wonderful to provide employment for the theatre community while we enliven the classic *Christmas Carol* story, refashioned with a new

twist for today. At a time of great conflict and hardship, I hope we can shine a little ray of optimism into the surrounding darkness.”

Co-book writer/composer **Paul Gordon** adds, “This piece was a joy to create, from the first beat of the idea to the culmination of the film. Discovering how these Dickensian characters (from different novels) would interact together and tell a cohesive story with a distinct musical voice was both a challenge and a thrill. I believe in finding new ways of sharing the magic of musical theatre with the world and now it’s more important than ever to escape for a few hours with a message of love and hope. I’m proud to be part of this creative team and to bring our community together in a responsible way during these challenging times.”

According to Producer Jackowitz, “*Estella Scrooge* was born after a conversation with our Executive Producer Kevin Surace. We thought, ‘wouldn’t it be great if there was a way to shoot something in a safe, isolated fashion, but put everyone together in the same frame?’ An experiment was done to test the concept and push the boundaries. Was it possible to shoot an entire musical this way? The answer was YES and what audiences will see are the fruits of that exciting labor.”

For over three years, Streaming Musicals has been creating content that is a hybrid between theatre and film, with in-theatre and soundstage captures that provide worldwide access to musicals that would not be as widely seen otherwise.

In April, over 160,000 people watched the premiere of Streaming Musicals’ production of Paul Gordon’s musical adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Executive Producer **Tom Polum** said, “Streaming Musicals is pleased to be a part of this groundbreaking new approach to recording an original musical. This incredibly talented and inventive team of artists have fashioned a story that is not only a reflection of our times, but a nod to great iconic figures of the past. The cutting-edge technology utilized in *Estella Scrooge* will create dazzling moments that will make viewers feel like they are in the 10th row of a theatre.”

Estella Scrooge features musical supervision by **Brad Haak** (*Mary Poppins*), choreography by **Natalie Lomonte** (*Every Woman Biennial*) and casting by **Tara Rubin Casting** (*Dear Evan Hansen*). Director of photography and editor is **Tyler Milliron** (Streaming Musicals’ *Pride and Prejudice*), production art design is by **Zach Wilson** (*Beauty and the Beast*), costume design is by **Somie Pak** (“Mélange”), hair and makeup design is by **Dena Olivieri** (*Forbidden Steps*) and props design is by **Katherine White** (Streaming Musicals’ *Marry Harry*).

The three-year-old **Streaming Musicals** is dedicated to presenting new, original musical theatre content, bringing live theatre to international audiences. The productions are filmed on theatrical and sound stages in high definition video and sound. Streaming Musicals also supports the creative artists who provide the site’s content with a revolutionary profit-sharing model.

Streaming Musicals is made up of a group of artists who want to make it easier for audiences to watch musicals and plays. They do it because they love theatre and want to share it with the world. The company captures the magic of theatre on film and bring it directly to viewer's devices. The company focuses on storytelling, character, and music. The company has also pioneered revolutionary new profit-sharing models that support the artists. StreamingMusicals.com.

Tickets are \$29.99 for 72-hour viewing for each household, or \$44.99 for a VIP Premium Theatre Experience, which includes unlimited viewings, a download of the CD and exclusive behind-the-scenes footage. Once purchased, audience members receive a promo code for viewing which is entered, along with the customer's e-mail address, at StreamingMusicals.com. Once activated, customers are set up with a free account for viewing on multiple devices. For further information about *Estella Scrooge* and to purchase tickets, please visit TheWallis.org/Scrooge.

BIOGRAPHIES

John Caird (*Book, Direction*) is an Honorary Associate Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Principal Guest Director of the Royal Dramatic Theatre, Stockholm and a freelance writer and director of plays, musicals and operas. His National Theatre productions include *Hamlet*, *Money*, *Humble Boy*, *The Seagull*, *Stanley*, *Trelawney of the Wells*, *Peter Pan* and his own Olivier Award-winning version of Bernstein's *Candide* which is now playing in multiple productions world-wide. His recent directorial credits include *Knights' Tale* and *Hamlet*, both in Tokyo, *Don Giovanni* at WNO in Cardiff, *McQueen* at the Haymarket Theatre, *Tosca* in Chicago, Houston and LA, *Love's Labour's Lost* at the Stratford Festival in Canada, *La Bohème* in San Francisco and Toronto, *Parsifal* in Chicago, *Twelfth Night* in Tokyo, and his own musical *Daddy Long Legs* Off-Broadway, in Tokyo and all across the U.S. His directorial work for the RSC has included over 20 productions of Shakespeare as well as classic and new plays, including *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Beggar's Opera*, *Twelfth Night*, *Peter Pan*, *Our Friends in the North*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Les Misérables* - the last two productions winning numerous awards in the West End, Broadway and all around the world. At Dramaten in Stockholm he has directed *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Dance of Death*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, *Gertrud* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Other productions include *Macbeth* at the Almeida Theatre, *Becket* at the Haymarket and *Song & Dance* at the Palace Theatre. For BBC TV, he adapted and directed "Henry IV" Parts I and II. John is also the Founder of the Mustardseed Arts and Educational Trust, a UK charity that raises funds for artistic and educational projects all around the world.

Paul Gordon (*Book, Music & Lyrics*) was nominated for a 2001 Tony Award for composing the music and lyrics to the musical *Jane Eyre*. He won the 2015 Jeff Award for Best New Work for his book, music and lyrics for *Sense and Sensibility*, commissioned by Chicago Shakespeare Theatre. He is the recipient of the 2009 Ovation Award for his music and lyrics to *Daddy Long Legs* which has had productions all over the world and was nominated for two Drama Desk Awards, an Off-Broadway Alliance Award and three Outer Critic Circle Awards. Paul has been an advocate for capturing theatre on film while creating new revenue streams for theatre artists. His company, StreamingMusicals.com, has been on the forefront of this movement and his musicals *Pride and*

Prejudice, Emma and *No One Called Ahead* can currently be streamed on Amazon Prime and other online platforms. *Knight's Tale*, written with John Caird, opened at the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo, 2018 and is slated for its second production in 2021. His other shows include: *Being Earnest, Analog and Vinyl, The Front, Juliet and Romeo, Sleepy Hollow, The Circle, Ribbit* and *The Sportswriter*. In his former life, Paul was a pop songwriter and wrote several number one songs. paulgordonmusic.com

About the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts:

The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts is a dynamic cultural hub and community resource where local, national and international artists share their artistry with ever-expanding audiences. The campus, located in the heart of Beverly Hills, CA, is committed to robust and distinctive presentations and education programs curated with both creativity and social impact in mind. Distinguished by its eclectic programming that mirrors the diverse landscape of Los Angeles and its location in the entertainment capital of the world, The Wallis has produced and presented more than 275 dance, theater, opera, classical music, cinema and family programs since its doors opened in October 2013. Hailed as “au courant” (LaLa Magazine), The Wallis was lauded by Culture Vulture, which proclaims, “If you love expecting the unexpected in the performing arts, you have to love The Wallis.” Its programming has been nominated for 57 Ovation Awards and seven L.A. Drama Critic's Circle Awards. The campus itself, a breathtaking 70,000-square-foot facility, celebrating the classic and the modern, has garnered six architectural awards. Designed by acclaimed architect Zoltan E. Pali (SPF:architects), the restored building features the original 1933 Beverly Hills Post Office (on the National Register of Historic Places), which serves as the theater's dramatic yet welcoming lobby, and includes the contemporary 500-seat, state-of-the-art Bram Goldsmith Theater; the 150-seat Lovelace Studio Theater; an inviting open-air plaza for family, community and other performances; and GRoW @ The Wallis: A Space for Arts Education, where learning opportunities for all ages and backgrounds abound. Together, these elements embrace the city's history and its future, creating a performing arts destination for L.A.-area visitors and residents alike. The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts is led by Chairman of the Board Michael Nemeroff, Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer Rachel Fine and Artistic Director Paul Crewes.

For more information about The Wallis, please visit: TheWallis.org.

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EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

WHAT:

ESTELLA SCROOGE

A Christmas Carol with a Twist

Created by John Caird and Paul Gordon

Produced by **Streaming Musicals** in association with **Michael Jackowitz** of WitzEnd Productions, **Michael Alden** and **David Bryant**

Executive Produced by **Jeffrey Grove** and **Kevin Surace** and for StreamingMusicals, **Tom Polum** and **Stacia Fernandez**

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WHEN:

ON DEMAND: Monday, December 21, 2020 through Sunday, January 3, 2021

CAST

Betsy Wolfe Estella
Clifton Duncan Philip 'Pip' Nickleby
Lauren Patten Dawkins
Patrick Page Mr. Merdle
Carolee Carmello Marla Havisham
Danny Burstein Ebenezer Scrooge
Megan McGinnis Betty Cratchit
Adam Halpin Bob Cratchit
Sarah Litzsinger Sissy Jupe
Tom Nelis Dedlock
Em Grosland Smike
Phoenix Best Charity & Mercy
David Bryant Mr. Podsnap
Gabrielle Reid Mrs. Pumblechook
Samuel Lee Roberts Mr. Flopson
Michael Francis McBride Mr. Dombey
Michele Lee Mrs. Noggs
Kristen Faith Oei Ms. Skiffins
Meg Gibson Molly
William Youmans Magwitch & Bagstock
Kevyn Morrow Jasper Jagers
Joziyah Jean-Felix Young Pip
Brooklyn Shuck Young Essy
Willow McCarthy Tiny Tammy

PRODUCTION

John Caird Book, Direction
Paul Gordon Book, Music & Lyrics
Brad Haak Musical Supervisor
Tyler Milliron Director of Photography and Editor
Zach Wilson Production Art Design
Somie Pak Costume Design
Dena Olivieri Hair and Makeup Design
Katherine White Props Design
Natalie Lomonte Choreography
Tara Rubin Casting Casting
Michael Jackowitz, WitzEnd Productions Producer
David Bryant, David Bryant Productions Producer
Michael Alden Producer

RUN TIME:

Approximately two hours, plus an intermission

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TICKET PRICES AND INFORMATION:

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For further information about *Estella Scrooge* and to purchase tickets, please visit

TheWallis.org/Scrooge

310.746.4000 (Tue.-Fri. 9:30 am – 2:30 pm)

Tickets@TheWallis.org