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VARIETY CHILDREN'S THEATRE PRESENTS OLIVER! THE BROADWAY MUSICAL

***Six performances, Oct. 14-17, at the Touhill Performing Arts Center Boast
Tony Award-Nominated Director and Cast of 80 Professional and Child Actors***

ST. LOUIS (Sept. 13, 2010) – Directed by Tony Award Nominee Lara Teeter, the beloved Broadway musical OLIVER! is coming to St. Louis, Oct. 14-17, at the Touhill Performing Arts Center, University of Missouri – St. Louis. The show is presented by Variety Children's Theatre, an initiative that brings together children of all abilities with professional adults in one of the city's top performance venues to create an unforgettable experience for theater-goers, cast and crew alike.

Based on Charles Dickens' novel, "Oliver Twist," OLIVER! The Broadway Musical includes such favorite songs as, "Consider Yourself," "I'd Do Anything," "Food, Glorious Food," and "Where is Love?" accompanied by a full orchestra. Performances are Thursday, Oct. 14, at 9 a.m.; Friday, Oct. 15, at 9 a.m. and 8 p.m.; Saturday, Oct. 16, at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.; and Sunday, Oct. 17, at 2 p.m. A VIP reception will precede Friday's Opening Night performance.

Fans won't have to "Pick a Pocket or Two" in order to purchase tickets, as general admission seats are just \$25. Groups of 10-19 people may purchase tickets at \$20 each, while groups larger than 20 may see the show for just \$15 per ticket. Tickets are available through the Touhill Ticket Office at 314-516-4949 or by visiting www.varietystl.org. Funded in part by the Regional Arts Commission (RAC), as well as local arts patrons Ken and Nancy Kranzberg, all proceeds benefit Variety the Children's Charity of St. Louis.

"From tryouts to production, Variety Children's Theatre allows children to learn on-stage and backstage production skills from seasoned professionals," said Jan Albus, executive director of Variety the Children's Charity. "The inclusive setting offers an unmatched opportunity to develop important relationships, skills sets and appreciation of the overall workings of a live musical theater program."

On-stage and behind-the-scenes at OLIVER! are some of the region's most talented professionals. Nine Equity Actors will grace the stage, including Rich Pizarkiewicz as Fagin, Tim Schall as Mr. Bumble, Michele Burdette-Elmer as Widow Corney, Whit Reichert as Mr. Sowerberry and Zoe Vonder Haar as

Mrs. Sowerberry. Meanwhile, John Armstrong, managing director for Hot City Theatre, is serving as production manager and Tony Award Nominee Lara Teeter, head of the musical theater program at Webster University, is directing the show. Many talent includes Costume Coordinator Peter Messineo and Choreographer Mark Krupinski, while Bess Moynihan of Fontbonne University is managing props. Dunsai Dai, associate professor of scene design at Webster University, has created an elaborate set that is not just appealing to the eye, but accessible to children with disabilities.

Eight Variety children, including current poster child Gracie, are part of the cast, with disabilities ranging from spina bifida and cerebral palsy to muscular dystrophy and down syndrome, all for whom Variety has provided medical equipment and other resources to help make their lives more fulfilling. In addition to the onstage talent, each major role in the OLIVER! production includes a Variety "shadow," allowing the children to learn life-long skills alongside the show's production director, musical director, choreographer, stage manager, sound technician, costume designer and more.

Variety Children's Theatre debuted in 2009 with its presentation of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, attracting 4,093 attendees to the Touhill Performing Arts Center over the course of four performances. This year, OLIVER! will be adjudicated for a Kevin Kline Award by the Professional Theatre Awards Council.

About Variety the Children's Charity of St. Louis

For more than 75 years, **Variety the Children's Charity of St. Louis** has helped thousands of children with disabilities say "I can" by providing them with vital medical equipment, as well as educational, therapeutic and recreational programs such as the annual Variety Adventure Camp and Children's Theatre. An international leader in fundraising, Variety the Children's Charity also distributes grants to more than 80 qualified agencies throughout the St. Louis area to fund programs and/or services that directly impact the lives of children with physical and mental disabilities. For more information on Variety, including upcoming events and volunteer opportunities, visit www.varietystl.org.

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