

2017-J5856

Senate Resolution No. 5856

BY: Senator DEFRANCISCO

COMMEMORATING the 60th Anniversary of the
Merry-Go-Round Playhouse, Inc.

WHEREAS, The arts, in whatever form, are central to human expression; they are truly a universal language and their contribution to the development of friendship and understanding among all peoples cannot be underestimated; and

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend those artistic organizations which have brought outstanding entertainment and cultural enrichment to the citizens of the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, Widely known as "Broadway in the Finger Lakes," the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse, located in Auburn, New York, is the region's largest professional musical theatre; and

WHEREAS, The Merry-Go-Round Playhouse was founded in 1958 as the Auburn Children's Theatre (A.C.T.) by Susan Riford and members of the

Auburn Service League; and

WHEREAS, Initially, the venue provided weekend dramatic classes for local children, and, in 1961, an in-school program was added; and

WHEREAS, The Auburn Children's Theatre's in-school program grew into a state-wide touring theatre by 1965, and in 1974, it became known as the Merry-Go-Round Youth Theatre Program; and

WHEREAS, The Merry-Go-Round Playhouse gained its name from the organization's use of an old carousel building in Emerson Park along Owasco Lake; the building was cleaned and painted by dozens of volunteers after the merry-go-round was removed, and a stage was added to the east side of the building; and

WHEREAS, The Merry-Go-Round Playhouse further evolved to become a professional summer stock theatre in 1975, and much of the casts and artistic staff traveled up from Manhattan for the first professional summer season; and

WHEREAS, Over the years the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse continued to grow, with attendance rising from 9,000 in 1982 to over 60,000 annually; the budget of the Playhouse and Youth Theatre additionally grew from \$180,000 in the early 1980s to over \$5 million; and

WHEREAS, The Youth Theatre program became one of the largest in the country, providing performances for over 125,000 students each school year in 74 districts and 23 counties in Central New York; this well-respected program offers workshops and performances to students in

grades K-12, with each opportunity tailored to the grade-level of the participants; and

WHEREAS, The Youth Theatre program at the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse additionally has a partnership with Nazareth College, which was initiated to enhance training and educational opportunities for students; this partnership will create an intensive professional track training program to rival many national programs of its kind; and

WHEREAS, In 2004, a \$3 million renovation was completed at the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse, which allowed for a remarkable transformation of the facility to provide greater comfort and accessibility for all audiences; the renovation included an expansion of seating capacity from 365 to 501; and

WHEREAS, In 2004, the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse finished formal agreements with the Actors Equity Association, American Federation of Musicians, and the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, to perpetuate the high caliber of shows produced by the Playhouse; and

WHEREAS, In 2012, the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse, Inc. launched the Finger Lakes Musical Theatre Festival, featuring off-Broadway productions and The Pitch series - a generation of new musicals; the Festival presents classic and contemporary works and in-school arts education for a diverse audience to spur social awareness, cultural, and economic development in the Finger Lakes region and in the City of Auburn; and

WHEREAS, The Finger Lakes Musical Theatre Festival is a multi-venue operation, utilizing space additionally in the newly renovated Auburn Public Theatre and the Carriage House Theater; and

WHEREAS, In its 60th Anniversary / 2018 season, the Finger Lakes Musical Theatre Festival will present "Mamma Mia!", "Anne of Green Gables", "Holiday Inn", "Murder for Two," and "Beehive"; and

WHEREAS, For the past 60 years, the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse, Inc. has been presenting quality theater to the Central New York area; and

WHEREAS, A vibrant arts community encourages collaboration, instills local pride, draws people together, and is essential to a community's vitality; over the past six decades, the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse, Inc. has contributed to the richness of Central New York's cultural palette; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when artistic societies of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse, Inc.; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to producing artistic director Brett Smock of the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse.