

THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

## Spirit of Maine Achievement Award

Presented to:

**Merritt David Janes '04**

The Alumni Association's Spirit of Maine Achievement Award is given to an alumnus/alumna who has graduated in the last fifteen years and whose accomplishments, commitment, and initiative in a profession, business, or public service arena reflect the high standards and vitality of the University of Maine.

The career of this Class of 2004 alumnus began on a high note and has sustained that fine quality and energy. As a student on campus, he belonged to Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity, joined musical groups, sang with the Maine Steiners, and earned a degree in music education. He also performed in regional musical and theatre productions in his native Vermont, in roles from solo tenor to Shakespeare. Planning to become a music teacher, he student-taught at Windham High School. But friends and teachers, noting his love of musical theatre and natural talent, encouraged him to consider Broadway. So he furthered his studies with two years at Circle in the Square theatre school in New York City.

Just three years after graduating from UMaine, he landed the lead in the Broadway national tour of the romantic comedy *The Wedding Singer*. He spent a year playing the lead in a tour of over 30 cities, followed by the title role in *Sweeney Todd*, in which he was the youngest actor to ever tour in the role. The *Sweeney Todd* tour included an appearance at the Collins Center for the Arts as well as Merrill Auditorium, both venues he knew from his undergraduate experience. He spent over a year as the delightful candlestick, Lumiere, in the Broadway national tour of *Beauty and the Beast*, and most recently, he toured as the villain Lord Farquaad in the musical *Shrek*.

Traveling and appearing in different venues each week presents multiple challenges, yet he has embraced and thrived in this environment. With challenging vocal and acting roles ranging from the entertaining Robbie Hart to the sinister Sweeney Todd, the kindly Lumiere, and the villain Lord Farquaad, he has demonstrated his tremendous acting and vocal range.

We are pleased to present the Spirit of Maine Achievement Award to a talented vocalist and actor who has brought quality enjoyment to audiences nationwide, Merritt David Janes, Class of 2004.

Kurt R. Marston '74, '79G  
Chair, University of Maine Alumni Association