



Contra Costa Musical Theatre
Gives Bay Area an “Oklahoma!” Hello
Audiences “Cain’t Say No” to a Favorite American Musical

WALNUT CREEK, February 17, 2010 — Contra Costa Musical Theatre (CCMT) will present The Great American Musical, Rodgers and Hammerstein’s “Oklahoma!” at Walnut Creek’s Leshar Center for the Arts, March 26 through April, 25. Tickets for “Oklahoma!” range from \$40 to \$45 (with discounts available for seniors, youth, and groups) and are on sale now at the Leshar Center for the Arts Ticket Office, 1601 Civic Drive in Walnut Creek, 925.943.SHOW (943-7469). Tickets can also be purchased online at www.lesherArtscenter.org.

The songs from this beloved musical have become favorites over the years and have now become American classics sure to delight audience members of all ages. Some of the show’s most memorable songs include "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning," "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top," "Out of My Dreams," "Many a New Day" and "People Will Say We're in Love." “Oklahoma!” is bursting with energy and pride and joy, sung by pioneers whose territory verges on statehood. (In 1953, ten years after the show opened on Broadway, Oklahoma adopted the title song as its official state song).

This glorious Rodgers and Hammerstein musical is set during the turn of the century in Oklahoma Territory. The famous opening scene introduces the audience to cowboy Curly McLain riding through corn “as high as an elephant’s eye” on his way to visit farm girl Laurey Williams. Both are smitten, but are too proud and stubborn to admit it. They flirt and tease each other but can’t seem to speak their real feelings, which leads to Laurey going to the big box social with her Aunt Eller’s brooding ranch hand, Jud Fry.

Meanwhile, local cowboy Will Parker receives a big welcome upon his return from “Kansas City,” providing an excuse for one of the most exuberant dance numbers in Broadway history. While in the big city, Will won enough prize money at the rodeo to earn the hand of Ado Annie, whose strict Pa won’t let him marry his daughter without cash up front. But, Will has a new problem he doesn’t even know about yet: in his absence his girl Annie has taken up with the exotic Persian peddler man, Ali Hakim. Annie confides to Laurey that she can’t choose between Will and Ali and just “Cain’t Say No” -- to anyone.

This musical also tackles class issues between the farmers and the cowmen in the still-developing, rugged landscape of a state in its infancy as characters struggle to find hope, love and the fulfillment of "the American Dream."

“Oklahoma!” Features New Performers and Beloved Bay Area Veterans

Making their CCMT debuts are four of the show’s lead actors: Zachary Franczak appearing as Curly, Jessica Knudsen as Laurey, Elise Youseff as Ado Annie and Jeff Draper as Jud Fry.

“Oklahoma!” will also feature some East Bay favorites such as Kerri Shawn as Aunt Eller, Steve Rhyne as Will Parker and Joel Roster as Ali Hakim. After successfully helming two CCMT hits, *Guys and Dolls* and *42nd Street*, Jennifer Perry returns for her third CCMT directing assignment with “Oklahoma!” Collaborating with Perry will be musical director and Shellie Award-winner Karl Pister, with story-telling dances by Shellie Award-winning choreographer Renee De Weese. Fans of “Oklahoma!” can expect a fun twist with CCMT’s interpretation of the dream ballet.

“Traditionally the ‘dream ballet’ is performed by ballet dancers who are not a part of the core cast of the show,” said Renee De Weese, choreographer. “Because the lead actors can dance as well as act and sing, the dream ballet will be a different experience for audience members who have seen this show in the past.”

About Contra Costa Musical Theatre

Based in Walnut Creek, Contra Costa Musical Theatre has a long history of producing dynamic musical productions and providing a home to local and national talent. CCMT has won more Shellie Awards for musicals than any other regional company, including a virtual sweep at the 30th Annual Shellie Awards ceremony, winning six Shellie Awards for its smash hit “Cinderella,” including Outstanding Production of the season. Since their move to the Leshner Center for the Arts in 1990, they have produced more than 30 full-scale productions, including the East Bay premieres of “Disney’s Beauty and the Beast,” “Urinetown, the Musical,” “The Full Monty,” and “Titanic, the Musical.” More information on CCMT can be found at www.ccmt.org.

Media Contact:

Liz Nunan

925.878.9465

ccmt_publicity@yahoo.com