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Photo Caption: Deborah Leamy as
Roxie Hart and Christine Marie Capsuto as
Velma Kelly

PRESS RELEASE

Woodminster Summer Musicals Concludes 50th Season August 5 With Chicago
Vaudeville-Style Musical Satirizes The Criminal Justice System and Celebrity Lawyers

July 21, 2016, Oakland, CA -- Producers Associates announces that the second show of the 50th anniversary season of the Woodminster Summer Musicals is Chicago. This clever and stylish satire will be performed August 5-14 at Woodminster Amphitheater in Oakland's Joaquin Miller Park, located at 3300 Joaquin Miller Road in the Oakland hills.

Chicago is a musical with music by John Kander, lyrics by Fred Ebb and a book by Ebb and Bob Fosse, based on a 1926 stage play of the same name by Maurine Dallas Watkins, a newspaper crime reporter. The story satirizes corruption in the criminal justice system through the stories of husband-killers Velma and Roxie, and their "celebrity lawyer," Billy Flynn. The vaudeville-inspired performance style provides the perfect opportunity for several flashy dance numbers.

Says managing director Harriet Schlader, "Our audiences have been requesting this show for years. Every time we put out a ballot, Chicago is the top choice. And we've been actively applying for rights to produce it for at least 6 years. We're excited that we were finally approved this year, and that we can provide this special treat for our audience in our 50th season."

Chicago's original 1975 production, choreographed by Bob Fosse, ran for about 2 years, but the 1996 Broadway revival is the second-longest running show in Broadway history, having

surpassed *Cats* in 2014. This revival won 6 Tony awards, 6 Drama Desk Awards, and a Grammy for the cast album.

The stage musical inspired a 2002 film of the same name, starring Catherine Zeta-Jones, Renée Zellweger, Richard Gere, and Queen Latifah. This film version won 6 Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and was the first film musical to win the Best Picture Oscar since *Oliver!* in 1968.

The production will be directed by Joel Schlader, with music direction by Daniel Thomas. Woodminster shows are performed with live orchestras, and musicians are members of Musicians Local No. 6.

Choreographer Lainie Sakakura is based in New York but a Bay Area native born in Oakland. For her choreographic work she has received the Joe A. Callaway Award and Joseph Jefferson Award for Best Choreography. Lainie is a Broadway veteran, having performed in the original cast of 6 Broadway shows. Most interesting in terms of Chicago, she is credited for Dance Reconstruction and Dance Captain for the 1999 Tony Award winning show *Fosse*, working over a 5 year period to help recreate 70 *Fosse*-choreographed numbers in a process to bring the show to Broadway. Says director Joel Schlader, "We really care about great choreography and dancing at Woodminster, and it's always a big focus for our shows. Ask anyone who has made it through one of our grueling dance auditions! And when we knew we were going to do Chicago, we thought about Lainie right away. I know people will be wowed by her work." Assistant to the choreographer is Adam Rogers, also based in New York and recently appearing in the original Broadway company of *American In Paris*.

Tickets are available by phone, at 510-531-9597, online at www.woodminster.com, or in person at Woodminster Amphitheater 10-4 daily or at the box office before any performance. Performances are August 5 (opening), 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, and 14, all at 8 pm.

Tickets for summer musicals at Woodminster Amphitheater range from \$30 to \$64 with a \$2 discount for children and seniors. Groups of 25 and more can purchase blocks of seats for about half price, providing an affordable outing or fundraiser for a church or service group, neighborhood association, or any other group. For information about tickets, including other discount programs, check www.woodminster.com or call 510-531-9597.

Woodminster continues its popular Kids Come Free program, where children and teens 16 or younger who are attending with paying adults can get free tickets on performance nights. Producers Associates is seeking sponsors for this longstanding program, which helps families introduce their kids to live theater in a relaxed and affordable environment. In its 25-year history, the Kids Come Free program has provided over 43,000 free tickets to young theater-goers. (Parents should note that *Chicago* has adult themes and burlesque overtones, and may not be of much interest to small children.)

The final dress rehearsal of *Chicago* on August 5 will be open to the public. It will start at 8 p.m., all tickets are \$20 at the door, and seating is open, first-come, first-choice. No group rates,

Kids Come Free, or other further discounts apply for the final dress rehearsal. Gates open at 7 pm that night, and audience members are welcome to bring picnics and use any open tables. Limited concessions.

After Chicago, the 50th season of the Woodminster Summer Musicals will continue with La Cage aux Folles September 2-11.

Over the last 50 years, Producers Associates has presented 157 productions, entertaining about a million Woodminster Summer Musicals ticket holders. The shows have been performed by more than 5000 actors, over 20% of them members of Actors Equity Association, making the organization one of the Bay Area's most reliable employers of professional actors. The musicals have always been performed with live professional orchestras, which have included 23 different conductors and over 1800 members of Musicians Local #6. In addition, the organization has employed 25 professional set designers, 17 lighting designers, 24 costume designers, 6 sound technicians, 18 choreographers, 6 directors, and over 1,500 young backstage interns.

Woodminster Summer Musicals are performed under the stars at Woodminster Amphitheater, an open-air performance facility in Joaquin Miller Park high in the Oakland Hills. The park's spectacular views and serene woodsy environment made it the perfect setting for the amphitheater, cascades, reflecting pool, and paths that were originally built as a WPA project in 1939-40. For many East Bay families, it is a long-standing summer tradition to enjoy a picnic in the park and then see a musical at Woodminster. For more information about the 2016 season or the history of the organization, visit www.woodminster.com.

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