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PRESS RELEASE

Woodminster Summer Musicals Announces 50th Season in 2016

Organization has been performing in Oakland's historic Woodminster Amphitheater every summer for 5 Decades

Anniversary Season includes Shrek The Musical, Chicago, and La Cage aux Folles

December 29, 2015, Oakland, CA -- Producers Associates announces that 2016 is the 50th Anniversary Season of the Woodminster Summer Musicals. The organization produced its first show in 1967, and has performed every summer since in historic Woodminster Amphitheater in Oakland's Joaquin Miller Park. The three musicals scheduled for 2016 are Shrek The Musical, Chicago, and La Cage aux Folles.

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.

Producers Associates is the anchor tenant for Woodminster Amphitheater, an historic city-owned venue in Joaquin Miller Park. With a dedicated board of directors, the organization has maintained and improved the facility, which attracts audience from all over the Bay Area and beyond, contributing to the economic health of the neighborhood. The Woodminster Summer Musicals are produced in cooperation with the City of Oakland's Parks and Recreation Department, and the City derives over \$45,000 per year in facility fees plus considerable revenues from parking fees.

For more than 25 years, Producers Associates has offered a Kids Come Free program, where children and teens up to 16 years old can attend for free with paying adults, and has given away more than 43,000 tickets to young theater-goers. The organization has also given 9 scholarships to young performers through the 6-year-old Jim Schlader Musical Theatre

Scholarship, and provides free tickets to a number of nonprofit and educational organizations to help them raise funds for their own programs.

Says Harriet Schlader, Managing Director, "When my late husband Jim and I started producing musicals at Woodminster, we never thought about it continuing for 50 years. We just wanted to provide affordable live summer family entertainment in the East Bay, and to foster a love of live theatre. It's our hardworking board, and our loyal audiences -- some of whom have been sitting in the same seats for 3 generations -- who have kept us healthy for so long. We're so proud to be a summertime tradition beloved by so many, and we're looking forward to the next 50 years!"

The shows are chosen with audience input, and are representative of the whole canon of musical theater. Says Schlader, "With a hundred years of musicals to choose from, you'd think it would be easy, but our selection process is always complex. We ask our audiences what they want to see, we ask other musical theaters what has worked for them, we consider our challenging performance space, and so forth. The 50th anniversary season should be special, and we think it will be -- we've tried to make sure we have something that everyone will love."

Shrek The Musical, which will be performed July 8-17, is based on the oscar-winning DreamWorks Animation film and the book by William Steig. The popular Shrek character and story has inspired films, television shows, video games, and amusement park attractions. This stage version, book by David Lindsay-Abaire and songs by Jeanine Tesori, was nominated for 8 Tonys and 12 Drama Desk awards, including Best Musical for both. Shrek is appropriate for all ages.

Chicago, which will be performed August 5-14, 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. The original 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. Chicago includes adult themes.

La Cage aux Folles, to be performed September 2-11, is a musical with book by Harvey Fierstein and lyrics and music by Jerry Herman, based on the 1973 French play of the same name by Jean Poiret. It's a farce that tells the story of a gay couple who must pretend to be straight (with one of the partners in drag) when they meet the very conservative parents of their son's fiancée. La Cage aux Folles won 6 Tony awards for the original 1983 production (including Best Musical, Best Score, and Best Book), and has had two Broadway revivals; it's the only show that has ever won the Tony Award for Best Revival of Musical twice and that has won a Best Production award for all three Broadway productions. La Cage aux Folles will appeal most to teens and adults.

Tickets for the 2016 season will be available by phone, mail, or online, after the season ticket renewal deadline February 15. Tickets range from \$30 to \$64, with discounts for seniors and groups. Season tickets offer about a 15% discount over single tickets.

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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