



## **CCMT Brings Big Broadway with Little Shop** *Contra Costa Musical Theatre Opens 51<sup>st</sup> Season with "Little Shop of Horrors"*

**WALNUT CREEK, September 5, 2011** — Contra Costa Musical Theatre (CCMT) will present Alan Menken and Howard Ashman's "Little Shop of Horrors" at Walnut Creek's Leshner Center for the Arts, October 14 through November 13, 2011. Tickets for "Little Shop of Horrors" range from \$44 to \$49 (with discounts available for seniors, youth, and groups) and are on sale now at the Leshner 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](http://www.lesherArtscenter.org).

"Little Shop of Horrors" is the third longest-running show in off-Broadway history and won the Drama Critics Circle Award, Drama Desk Award and Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Musical in 1982-83. The musical, based on the 1960 Roger Corman science fiction spoof film, includes such songs as "Skid Row", "Somewhere That's Green" and "Suddenly Seymour" It tells the story of hapless Seymour, a flower shop worker who acquires a strange and unusual plant that grows bigger and bigger when fed human blood.

This will be the first appearance at the Leshner Center for the Arts of the popular musical, which was turned into an Academy Award-nominated film in 1986 starring Rick Moranis, Ellen Greene and Steve Martin. The show had a 2003 revival on Broadway starring Tony Award-Winner Hunter Foster as Seymour, and continued on a two-year national tour with Anthony Rapp in the lead role.

### **"Little Shop to Feature Pieces of Broadway"**

CCMT's production will feature many of the actual pieces from the 2003 Broadway production, including the original set, costumes, props, wigs and puppets. The set, designed by recent Tony Award-winner Scott Pask (*The Book of Mormon*) marks the first time a full set used in the Broadway production will also appear at the Leshner Center. Production Manager Scott Strain is excited to bring a piece of Broadway to local audiences.

"We've had certain pieces of Broadway productions in our shows before, but to have all these elements together is exciting. I am especially excited to bring the amazing Audrey II puppets, which were created by the famed Jim Henson Company, to the Leshner Center. We actually had to fly our Technical Director to the warehouse to measure them and make sure they could fit in the building!"

### **“Staff and Cast Feature Bay Area’s Best”**

Returning to CCMT is director Jasen Jeffrey, who is nominated for a Shellie Award for last years’ smash CCMT production of *RENT*. Also returning is award-winning choreographer Suzanne Brandt (*Evita*) and making her CCMT music directorial debut is Joan Cifarelli.

The cast features many audience favorites, such as Nicole Helfer (Val in last season’s *A Chorus Line*) as Audrey, and Taylor Jones (Mimi in *RENT*) as Crystal. Making their CCMT debuts are two professional actors, Robert Brewer as Seymour, and Kelly Houston (known by some as the ‘James Earl Jones of the Bay Area’) as the voice of Audrey 2. The cast also includes Ben Bogen, Evan Boomer, Derek Travis Collard, Mathew Davis, Mark Eichorn, Melissa Heinrich, Elizabeth Jones, Jason Pedroza and Jasmin Williams..

“We have an amazing cast for this production, and I am so excited to start working with them!” said director Jeffrey. “While the subject matter is satirical, and will provide great comedy, these actors will present very honest portrayals of the characters. They won’t be the stereotypical ‘caricatures’ that you see in most productions.”

### **“Family Fun at the Leshner Center”**

While a musical about a man-eating plant may seem like more of an adult offering, the spoof-like comedy, with an upbeat ’50s-’60s rock and Motown-style score, and the Muppet-like puppets will appeal to families as well. Being presented in a larger venue will also help reduce the ‘scary factor’ for some of the younger audience members.

“The Hofmann Theatre is large enough so that younger kids who might be frightened can sit farther back and not be intimidated by the humongous puppets.” said Strain. “Although each parent knows their own child best, of course, we are generally recommending the show for ages 10 and up. It might be fine for younger kids too, but it’s really up to the parent. Rent the musical on DVD and see how your child reacts. Kids who do attend will get a real treat seeing some of the most amazing puppets in the world.”

CCMT will be holding special promotional events during the five-week run where audience members can get up close and personal with the plant puppets, with photo opportunities. Specific dates and offers can be found at their website at [www.ccmt.org](http://www.ccmt.org)

### **About Contra Costa Musical Theatre**

Based in Walnut Creek, Contra Costa Musical Theatre has a fifty-year 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. Since their move to the Leshner Center for the Arts in 1990, they have produced more than 40 full-scale productions, including the East Bay premieres of Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast*, *Urinetown, the Musical*, *The Full Monty*, *RENT* and *Titanic, the Musical*.

CCMT will follow up with another East Bay Premiere later this season with their production of Andrew Lloyd Webbers’ *Sunset Boulevard* opening March 16, 2012. Tickets for this show are also on sale now.

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