

NEWS RELEASE



Media Contact:

Meg Lewis
Public Relations Manager
(334) 271-5326
Email: mlewis@asf.net

Alabama Shakespeare Festival 2008-09 Season Boasts Three World Premieres

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONTGOMERY, AL (Thursday, May 15, 2008) The 2008-09 Season at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival holds an unprecedented number of World Premieres – three new plays that have evolved from the theatre’s Southern Writers’ Project. ASF will premiere a new offering from Osborn Award-winning author of *Gee’s Bend* Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder called *The Furniture of Home*. In it, four characters struggle to make sense of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in the small coastal town of Bayou LaBatre, Alabama – a hard-hit area that escaped the awareness of most of the nation. *The Fall of the House* by Robert Ford is a time-shifting tale of a mystic whose life and influence weave through 150 years of extraordinary lives, including a young African-American architect and famed nineteenth century storyteller Edgar Allen Poe. The theatre has also commissioned Michael Vigilant to write a play about legendary University of Alabama football coach Paul W. “Bear” Bryant called *Bear Country*.

The 2008-09 Season also includes Shakespeare’s *The Comedy of Errors* and *Othello*, as well as Charles Morey’s adaptation of *The Three Musketeers* in the repertory season from April through June. The children’s production will be Joseph Robinette’s adaptation of *Charlotte’s Web*. There will be three musical offerings including Marion J. Caffey’s musical revue *Three Mo’ Divas* to kick the season off in October. *A Christmas Carol: The Musical* with music by Alan Menken and lyrics by Lynn Ahrens will warm the hearts of holiday theatre-goers. The summer block-buster musical will be Boubil and Schönberg’s *Les Misérables*.

2007-08 was a landmark season at ASF. The holiday production of *Peter Pan* became the best selling production in ASF history. *Peter Pan* is closely followed by *Menopause the Musical* and Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast* as the top three most successful shows – all having been produced within the past two years at ASF. ASF audiences have increased from 117,965 in 2004-05 to 164,335 in 2006-07. ASF’s student matinee program, SchoolFest, has nearly doubled in attendance in the same amount of time. Audience diversity has increased by 15% as well. With new initiatives in place like the multicultural arts celebration CultureFest, College Tours, Young Professional Nights and the use of social networking media, ASF is strategically laying the foundation of what it hopes will be a strong and enduring future.

Single tickets for selected shows will go on sale later this summer. A number of subscription options are available and a payment plan will be available to full-season subscribers for the first time ever. Corporate Subscriptions are also available. For more information please call the Box Office at (334) 271-5353.

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The 2008 – 2009 Season at ASF

Three Mo' Divas

By Marion J. Caffey

September 26 – October 12, 2008

Festival Theatre

From the creator of the smash hit musical *Three Mo' Tenors* comes the new hit musical *Three Mo' Divas*. Divas features three classically trained dynamos who can sing the notes out of everything from Puccini to Pop to Broadway to R&B. Backed by a band of master musicians the Divas sing hit after hit including “Let the Good Times Roll,” “Proud Mary,” “It’s in His Kiss,” “Lady Sings the Blues,” “It’s Raining Men,” “Respect” and more!

Charlotte’s Web

Adapted by Joseph Robinette

October 8 – November 16, 2008

Octagon Theatre

In the tradition of *Winnie the Pooh* and *James and the Giant Peach*, ASF continues great family programming with a delightful staging of E.B. White’s classic tale of a spider who becomes the best friend a little pig ever had—and whose good deeds are returned in the most inspiring ways.

A Christmas Carol: The Musical

Music by Alan Menken

Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens

Based on the story by Charles Dickens

November 7 – December 28, 2008

Festival Theatre

A Christmas Carol: The Musical wowed audiences at New York’s Madison Square Garden for over a decade—don’t miss it in Montgomery! This spectacular adaptation of Charles Dickens’ tale about of miserly old man who finds the meaning of Christmas with the help of a crippled little boy and a few other-worldly experiences features a score by composing giants Lynn Ahrens (*Ragtime: The Musical, Seussical*) and Alan Menken (*Little Mermaid, Disney’s Beauty and the Beast*).

Bear Country

By Michael Vigilant

Southern Writers’ Project World Premiere

January 11 – February 15, 2009

Octagon Theatre

What if you had the opportunity to get up close and personal with legendary University of Alabama football coach Paul “Bear” Bryant? In ASF’s production of *Bear Country*—you can. Sit in the stands and absorb the wit, wisdom and life journey of a man who rose from being the child of dirt poor sharecroppers to become an Alabama icon and the national standard by which college football coaches are judged.

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The Furniture of Home

By Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder

Southern Writers' Project World Premiere

March 8 – April 5, 2009

Octagon Theatre

From the author of the hit play *Gee's Bend* and winner of the prestigious American Theatre Critics' Association Osborn Award comes Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder's latest masterwork. Set in Bayou LaBatre, Alabama in the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, four people struggle to rebuild their lives. But outside forces threaten to hinder the journey that takes them from losing everything to finding the meaning of home.

The Fall of the House

By Robert Ford

Southern Writers' Project World Premiere

April 19 – May 17, 2009

Octagon Theatre

Munny is more than an ex-slave. She is a mystic whose life and influence weave through 150 years of extraordinary lives, including famed nineteenth century storyteller Edgar Allen Poe, Poe's dying mother and his philandering father. But how is a talented but troubled twentieth century female architect related to those people and events from so many years before? Only Munny holds the key to the mysterious connection.

* * * **The Repertory Season** * * *

The Three Musketeers

Based on the novel by Alexandre Dumas

Adapted by Charles Morey

April 26 – June 14, 2009

Festival Theatre

Charles Morey's sensational adaptation of Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* was one of the major hits of ASF's 2007-08 season—Morey's adaptation of Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* promises to do the same. It's all for one and one for all as D'Artagnan, Athos, Aramis and Porthos cross swords with the evil Cardinal Richelieu and the enemies of France. In addition to being a rip-roaring tale, this production features costumes and a set that have to be seen to be believed.

Othello

By William Shakespeare

May 3 – June 14, 2009

Festival Theatre

The beautiful Desdemona defies society and marries Othello, a Moorish general and chooses to follow him to Cyprus where her husband must repulse the invading Turks. But the villainous Iago, a junior officer in Othello's army, sets out to destroy the lives of the couple for his own selfish gains.

The Comedy of Errors

By William Shakespeare

May 10 – June 14, 2009

Festival Theatre

The Bard is at his punning and playful best in this fun and farcical romp. The story centers on the arrival of Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse in the town of their twin brothers Antipolus and Dromio of Ephesus. Mistaken identities result in hilarious mishaps and mayhem including arrests, theft, infidelity, madness and seductions.

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Boublil and Schönberg's

Les Misérables

July 12 – August 16, 2009

Festival Theatre

Les Misérables is among the grandest, most spectacular, most moving musicals in the history of theatre—and ASF is one of the few theatres in America given the rights to produce it. Set in 1800's France, an unfairly prosecuted convict escapes his captor to begin a new life. But his nemesis and past are never far behind. *Les Misérables* is a stellar story told through incredible songs such as "I Dreamed a Dream," "Castle on a Cloud," "Master of the House," "On My Own" and "Bring Him Home."

For more information on the 2008-09 Season at ASF, call the Box Office at (334) 271-5353.

The Alabama Shakespeare Festival is among the largest Shakespeare theatres in the world. Designated as The State Theatre of Alabama, ASF has been located in Montgomery since 1985 when it moved from Anniston as a result of Mr. and Mrs. Wynton M. Blount's gift of a performing arts complex set in the 250-acre Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park.

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