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**THE SANTA MONICA CIVIC LIGHT OPERA
ANNOUNCES SELL-OUT PERFORMANCE OF
“MY FAIR LADY”
AT THE HISTORIC AVALON CASINO THEATER
DRAWS FULL HOUSE, ENCOURAGING MORE
SHOWS BY COMPANY!**

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“MY FAIR LADY” A HIT IN AVALON

SANTA MONICA, CA (*August 1, 2005*) The Santa Monica Civic Light Opera (SMCLO), Santa Monica’s largest community theatre company returns home after taking their summer production of *My Fair Lady*, on the road last week to Avalon, Catalina. SMCLO’s one-night engagement of *My Fair Lady* sold out the historic Avalon Casino Theater on Santa Catalina Island last Wednesday night, encouraging the company to bring future shows there next summer, if not sooner. Over 800 residents and visitors were in attendance. Aside from the town’s 3,500 annual residents, vacationers who rent beach cottages for a week who traveled mostly from Long Beach, Newport Beach, and Dana Point and were surprised to find that the nightly movie showing in the Avalon Theatre had been cancelled to make way for SMCLO’s spectacular “deluxe concert” version of *My Fair Lady*.

My Fair Lady concluded SMCLO’s 04/05 theatre season, but Producer Brett Fisher had decided to give the residents and visitors of Avalon a taste of what Santa Monica enjoys year-round for “One Night Only” by taking their closing-night-sell-out production to Avalon. “It was an immense success,” said Fisher, producer of the musical, both in Santa Monica and Avalon. “Frank [Dr. Ford, the director] had to restage the whole show in a day, to keep the show visually stimulating in the absence of sets, and to compensate for the reduced stage space,” added Fisher. The company’s home theatre, Barnum Hall, on the Santa Monica High School campus boasts a 40’ proscenium width and 20’ depth. Not only was it a first for SMCLO to take a show on the road, but according to Chuck Liddell, Avalon historian, “in the 76 year history of the Avalon Theatre, this was the first time a live orchestra was used in the orchestra pit!” “This was a historic production... this made history,” added Liddell.

My Fair Lady played — for one night only, last Wednesday, July 27, 2005 at 8pm in the historic Avalon Theater, an art moderne landmark, most famous for its grand ballroom upstairs and opulent dances in the 1940’s. “In a year of great plays and great productions, we have the special privilege of presenting the finest of them all — *My Fair Lady* — the grandest of the grand, the jewel of an altogether unforgettable year!” said Dr. Frank X. Ford, SMCLO’s Artistic Director and director of the show.

Brett Fisher, SMCLO producer and managing director is the company’s business manager and

an experienced music director and orchestrator, (who was also the show's conductor) said, "The turnout and support was far greater than we had ever expected. Performing in a new town, for the first time, I heard, can be hit and miss. They say you usually have to do things there a few times before the locals will come. With this kind of support, you can be sure we will be back again." Based on the overwhelming success of the Catalina show, Fisher said they might seek out other venues outside of Santa Monica to possibly tour to in the summer of 2006. "We would love to take future shows to arts-deprived towns and expose them to other forms of live entertainment. In Santa Monica, patrons have so many choices of what to go see and do everyday." Catalina's audience, Fisher said, "was a pleasant surprise. It's a big deal for us to be so appreciated."

The show on the road, or rather, across the water, was not the logistical nightmare it could have been thanks to the cooperation of the Santa Catalina Island Company and the Catalina Express which made the crossing seem a short distance to travel. "They were so accommodating," said Fisher. "The Island Company cancelled its regular movie so that we could use the theater. That was big because they depend on that revenue and were willing to do so to give the residents and visitors a special treat." "I have never seen the quality of performance in a stage play in Avalon before," said local resident Barbara Ezell.

The Santa Monica Civic Light Opera, a sponsored educational activity of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, serves as a partner to SAMOHI's Theatre Arts Program, enhancing the student experience through mentoring by alumni and theatre professionals and developing productions for the Humanities Center and Barnum Hall stages.

This past February, SMCLO received two coveted NAACP awards for Best Lighting and Best Sets, out of eight nominations for their acclaimed production last summer of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." SMCLO joins the elite ranks of the Geffen Playhouse, the Theatre at Boston Court, Troika Entertainment, and the Mark Taper Forum/Center Theatre Group, whose productions were also nominated.

SAMOHI is proud of its illustrious alumni, including actors Glenn Ford, Gene Nelson, Oscar-winner Gloria Stuart, Oscar-winner Sean Penn, Oscar-nominee Robert Downey, Jr., Rob Lowe, Charlie Sheen, Emilio Estevez, Holly Robinson, Dean Cain, Ryan D. Hurst, Wallace Smith, Tessa Thompson, Matt Walker, Keith Coogan, John Augustine, Amber Tamblyn, and Colleen Ford; and writers/producers Meredith Stiehm, and Zack Estrin, among many others.

The SMCLO gratefully acknowledges Samohi and SMMUSD staff members: Dr. Ilene Straus, *Chief Educational Officer/Principal*, Catherine Baxter, *Dean of the Performing Arts Department*, and Dr. John Deasy, *Superintendent of the SMMUSD* for the generous and continuous support of the SMCLO and Santa Monica High School Theatre Arts Program.

The SMCLO is also grateful for the support of many community partners, most notably presenting season sponsor **Washington Mutual**, and season sponsors **Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel**, the **Santa Monica Daily Press** and our newest sponsor, **Gelson's, the super market**. Joining this production are sponsors **Santa Catalina Island Company** and **The Catalina Express**.

For additional information about the Santa Monica Civic Light Opera and the Samohi Theatre Arts Program, contact Brett Fisher, Producer and Managing Director, at 310-458-5939.

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