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'Oklahoma!' Comes to Cohan Center May 2

SAN LUIS OBISPO– The newly conceived national tour of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein's landmark musical, "Oklahoma!" has been hailed by the New York Daily News as "fresh, vital and stunning!"

Cal Poly Arts presents "Oklahoma!" -- the final 2005/06 Cal Poly Arts season performance -- on Tuesday, May 2, at 7 p.m. in the Christopher Cohan Center.

Former San Luis Obispo resident and popular actress Pat Sibley is part of the national touring cast, performing the major supporting role of "Aunt Eller."

Based on the Lynn Riggs' play, "Green Grow The Lilacs," "Oklahoma!" was Rodgers & Hammerstein's first collaboration and remains, in many ways, their most innovative.

The show set the standards for modern musical theatre and features such classic numbers as "Oh, What A Beautiful Mornin'," "People Will Say We're In Love," "The Surrey With The Fringe On Top" and the rousing title song.

Set in the territory of Oklahoma at the turn of the century, against a background of the rivalry between cattlemen and farmers, "Oklahoma!" is the story of the farm girl Laurey and the two rivals for her affection: the cowboy Curly and Jud, the brooding farmhand.

Written in 1943, "Oklahoma!" became an instant hit for Rodgers & Hammerstein, launching a remarkable career that went on to include the musicals "Carousel," "The King and I," "South Pacific," and "The Sound of Music."

The longest-running musical of its time -- a record held for 15 years -- "Oklahoma!" also generated a decade-long U.S. national tour, a record-setting original West End run at the Theatre Royal/Drury Lane, and over 30,000 productions to date in more than one dozen languages.

The 1955 film version, directed by Fred Zinneman and produced by Rodgers & Hammerstein, starred Shirley Jones, Gordon MacRae, and Rod Steiger.

"Oklahoma!" has been honored with numerous awards including a special Pulitzer Prize, two Academy Awards, an honorary Grammy and a special Tony Award.

In 1993, it became the first Broadway musical commemorated in a U.S. postage stamp and a recent survey by New York's Drama League deemed "Oklahoma!" "the Best Musical of the Century."

The Cal Poly Arts evening features direction by Fred Hanson and choreography by Ginger Thatcher. The original designs of Anthony Ward (sets and costumes) and David Hersey (lighting) have been recreated for the tour.

The show is adapted from the Cameron Mackintosh presentation of the Royal National Theatre production directed by Trevor Nunn with choreography by Susan Stroman, recently seen in London and on Broadway.

Tickets for the performance range from $56 - $68, with student discounts available, and may be purchased at the Performing Arts Ticket Office, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays. To order by phone, call (805) 756-2787; to order by fax: (805) 756-6088. Order on-line at www.pacslo.org.

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For audio and video samples of Cal Poly Arts events, visit www.calpolyarts.org.

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