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N E W S

THIS WONDERFUL LIFE RETURNS TO PORTLAND CENTER STAGE

New Actor, New Director Bring Bright Perspectives to this Hilarious Stage Adaptation of the Frank Capra Classic *It's a Wonderful Life*

“You see we’re all George Baileys in one form or another.”

Frank Capra, responding to a 1956 fan letter

November 9, 2006 – **Portland** When Portland Center Stage premiered *This Wonderful Life* in 2005, it was a show that audiences and critics alike greeted with astonishment and uproarious laughter. Somewhere between adaptation, homage and parody and spotlighting the inherent comedy in the film’s overflowing sentimentality with wit, physicality and audience-inclusive asides, the play takes a familiar holiday classic and adds more bonus features than any DVD on the market. Contributing to the play’s entertainment value is the fact that all our favorite characters from the film are performed by a single, incredibly versatile, actor!

The script was the inspired collaboration of two admitted admirers of the 1946 icon of holiday Hollywood. At the suggestion of PCS Artistic Director Chris Coleman, **Mark Setlock** (*Fully Committed 2004*) and comedic playwright **Steve Murray** (*Manna*, JAW/West 2002) met in 2004 and began to turn what had been “one of those things Mark had always wanted to do” into another phenomenal product of the Portland theater community. Setlock also starred in the world premiere production of *This Wonderful Life* last season. This year’s production offers those who missed out last year a great opportunity to capture its magic and those who saw the premiere production a chance to see how this amazing material can be uniquely re-animated with a new actor/director team behind the wheel.

Matthew Floyd Miller stars and **Cliff Fannin Baker** directs *This Wonderful Life* on the Gerding Theater at the Armory Main Stage, 128 NW Eleventh Ave. Preview performances run Tuesday, November 28 - Thursday, November 30; Opening is Friday, December 2 at 7:30 PM and the Closing Performance is on Christmas Eve (Dec. 24th) at 6 PM. All other evening performances take place at 7:30 PM while Noon Thursday and 2 PM Saturday and Sunday matinee dates are also available. Tickets: \$16.50, 30+under, \$28 - \$59.50, others. PCS Box Office: 503-445-3700; More information is available at www.pcs.org.

The second production in PCS’s 2006/07 **Key Private Bank** Main Stage series, *This Wonderful Life* is presented by **Key Bank**.

It's a Wonderful Life was propelled into nationwide popularity in the mid-70s, when a clerical error let the copyright lapse and TV stations jumped on the chance to air it for free. Little need be said about its plot here. It's Christmas Eve in a small New England town near the end of World War II and George Bailey, one of the town's good citizens, fears he's failed his family, his friends and his town. In despair, he considers suicide until Clarence, a dotty angel-in-waiting, shows him how bleak the world would have been if he'd never lived.

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In little more than an hour, in *This Wonderful Life*, Matthew Floyd Miller traverses George Bailey's entire life, from pre-Depression America through the end of World War II. In the process, he brings to life more than two dozen characters – boys and girls, men and women -- in rapid succession with little more than a change in pitch or a sharpening of the gaze. These characters, representing all aspects of a town's community and each with its own flaws, are expressed with the full range of emotions and an uncanny resemblance to the characters in the movie. This would be a challenge for any actor, but Miller, whose recent characters range from Katurian, the ill-fated writer in Martin McDonagh's darkly disturbing black comedy *The Pillowman*, to one of the hapless and idiotic suitors in Steve Martin's sex farce *The Underpants*, to the soul searching protagonist in the stage adaptation of Thornton Wilder's coming of age drama *Theophilus North*, handles them all with grace, humor and compassion.

This Wonderful Life is much more than mimicry. Matthew Floyd Miller provides a running commentary that satirizes the conventionality and corniness of the movie. But isn't that what makes it all just so...*wonderful*? In his review of the 2005 production, Bob Hicks of the Oregonian called *This Wonderful Life* "...a reason to surrender to the sentiment and the season."

The Conceiver, MARK SETLOCK won the 2000 Outer Critics Circle Award and Drama Desk nomination for best solo performance for *Fully Committed*, which he helped create with playwright Becky Mode. *Fully Committed* had its world premiere at the Adirondack Theatre Festival. In addition to New York and Portland, Mark has performed *Fully Committed* in Los Angeles and Boston. Mark Setlock starred in the world premiere production of *This Wonderful Life* at Portland Center Stage in December 2005.

The Playwright, STEVE MURRAY is an award-winning, nationally produced playwright who divides his time between writing for the stage and as a film and television critic for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. His plays *Hungry to Bed* and the box-office record-breaking *Rescue & Recovery* were directed by PCS Artistic Director Chris Coleman at Atlanta's Actor's Express. His comedy *Manna* was developed at PCS's JAW/West 2002 and was produced the following year at Actor's Express.

The Star, Matthew Floyd Miller is making his Portland Center Stage debut in *This Wonderful Life*. Most recently he has performed as Katurian in *The Pillowman* as well as in *The Underpants*, both at A Contemporary Theatre in Seattle. His Broadway credits include *Not About Nightengales* and *The Invention of Love*. Off-Broadway credits include *Letters From Cuba*, *The Seagull*, *The Three Sisters* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Matthew received his MFA from New York University and lives in New York City.

The Director, Cliff Fannin Baker is Arkansas Repertory Theatre's founding producing artistic director. During his 23 years of leadership, The Rep produced hundreds of plays of every genre, including more than 30 world premieres. Among his favorite directing credits for The Rep are *Evita*, *Waiting for Lefty*, *Goodwoman (of Setzuan)*, *Private Eyes*, *Art* and *Gypsy*. Mr. Baker was the first recipient of the Arkansas Governor's Award for Outstanding Individual Artist and he has also received the golden Circle Award for Regional Achievement, the Award of Distinction from the Arts and Humanities Commission and the 1999 Arts Award for Lifetime Achievement. Previously for Portland Center Stage, Mr. Baker directed the Fall 2003 world premiere production of Steven Drukman's edgy and intelligent *Another Fine Mess*.

Matthew Floyd Miller*

Cliff Fannin Baker
Dex Edwards
Jeff Cone
Daniel Ordower
Jen Raynak
Mark Tynan*
Jamie Hill

Performer

Director
Set Designer
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Sound Designer
Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager

* The actor and stage managers for this play are members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

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This Wonderful Life
A stage adaptation of the screenplay, *It's a Wonderful Life*
Conceived by Mark Setlock Written by Steve Murray
Directed by Cliff Fannin Baker
Starring Matthew Floyd Miller

Portland Center Stage * Gerding Theater at the Armory * 128 NW Eleventh Ave.
Tickets \$16.50 - \$59.50 * **Box Office 503-445-3700** * www.pcs.org

EVENINGS 7:30 PM

Tuesdays Nov. 28(P), Dec. 5, 12, 19
Wednesdays Nov. 29(P), Dec. 6, 13, 20
Thursdays Nov. 30(P), Dec. 7, 14, 21
Fridays Dec. 1(O), 8, 15, 22
Saturdays Dec. 2, 9, 16, 23
Sundays Dec. 3, 17

MATINEES

Noon (NO Q&A Sessions Following)
Thursdays Dec. 7, 14

2PM
Saturdays Dec. 9, 23
Sundays Dec. 3, 10, 17, 24

CLOSING Christmas Eve Performance - Sunday, December 24th at 6:00 PM

(P) = Preview • (O) = Opening Night

Student/Senior Matinees

Every Thursday Matinee at Noon is programmed especially for our student and senior audiences. All patrons enjoy discounted ticket prices. **PLEASE NOTE:** There will be **NO** post-show Q&A sessions for *This Wonderful Life*.

Prologue

Join us for a lively pre-show introduction to the play you are about to see with PCS Literary and Education staff and/or special guests.

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, December 5 – December 21

6:30PM Location will be announced and posted in the Gerding Theater at the Armory lobby.

Access Performances

Audio Described

Friday, December 8 7:30 PM

Sign Interpreted

Thursday, December 14 7:30 PM

The Gerding Theater Main Stage is fully accessible for all people with disabilities. Assistive listening devices are available from the coatroom, **free** of charge.

About Portland Center Stage

Established in 1988, **PORTLAND CENTER STAGE** is Portland's flagship theater company, attracting more than 90,000 theatergoers annually. With five Main Stage and four Studio productions in the 2006-2007 Season, PCS produces a blend of classical, contemporary and world premiere works, in addition to its annual summer playwrights festival, Just Add Water/West. PCS also offers a variety of education and outreach programs for youth and adults, including the new Portland Center Stage GreenHouse school of theater.

PORTLAND CENTER STAGE'S new home in the Gerding Theater at the Armory opened to the public with facility tours and an outdoor community celebration on October 1, 2006. The rehabilitated Armory houses a 599-seat Main Stage and a 200-seat black box Studio, along with production, rehearsal, and administrative office spaces. The facility is also a national model for sustainable design: it is the first building in Portland, the first building on the National Register of Historic Places, and the first performing arts venue in the world to achieve the pinnacle of green building certification, Platinum LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). The \$36.1 M capital campaign to fund this new home continues, with over \$28.5 M raised to date.

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The Portland Center Stage 2006-2007 Inaugural Season in the
Gerding Theater at the Armory

- *West Side Story* based on a conception of Jerome Robbins; Book by Arthur Laurents; Music by Leonard Bernstein; Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, Directed by Chris Coleman, October 3 – November 5, 2006, Main Stage – **EXTENDED THROUGH NOVEMBER 12!**
- *I Am My Own Wife* by Doug Wright, Directed by Victor Pappas, November 7 – December 17, 2006, Studio
- *This Wonderful Life* by Steve Murray, Conceived by Mark Setlock, Directed by Cliff Fannin Baker, November 26 – December 24, 2006, Main Stage
- *Misalliance* by George Bernard Shaw, Directed by Chris Coleman, January 9 – February 4, Main Stage
- *Act a Lady* by Jordan Harrison, Directed by Cliff Fannin Baker, January 28 – March 11, 2007, Studio
- *The Thugs* by Adam Bock, Directed by Rose Riordan, Feb. 9 – March 10, 2007 (10:30 pm, Friday and Saturday nights only), Studio
- *The Pillowman* by Martin McDonagh, Directed by Rose Riordan, February 18 – March 18, 2007, Main Stage
- *Fences* by August Wilson, Directed by Jonathan Wilson, April 10-May 6, 2007, Main Stage A co-production with Hartford Stage Company and Dallas Theater Center
- *Bad Dates* by Theresa Rebeck, Directed by Timothy Near, April 15 – June 10, 2007, Studio

Portland Center Stage's 2006/07 season is made possible in part by support from the Regional Arts & Culture Council, the Oregon Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes that a great nation deserves great art.

www.pcs.org